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CONTENTS

Comments	Page 17	Bird Stories. By Y. Y.	Page 23
Russia and Britain	19	London Exhibitions. By Raymond Mortimer	24
Is Australia Threatened? By Henry Bateson	19	Stalin Moy Golubchik. By Sagittarius	24
Decentralise Production	20	Plays and Pictures	24
A London Diary. By Critic	21	Correspondence	24
This England	22	From S. Garry; G. L. Barron; Prof. Skene; Ted Bramley; G. L. Schwartz and others.	
Bread	22	Books in General. By G. W. Stonier	27

Reviews:	Page
Telling the Tale. By V. S. Pritchett	28
Thinkers of the Civil War. By H. N. Brailsford	28
Democracy. By Harold J. Laski	29
Life on the Farm. By Desmond Hawkins	29
Free Frenchmen. By Raymond Mortimer	30
Week-end Competitions	31

THE UNITED NATIONS PLAN

Mr. Churchill and the President are training the "united nations" to take long perspectives. The speech at Ottawa and the message to Congress both reflected the plan and time-table worked out at Washington with any modifications that may have come from the simultaneous talks between Stalin and Mr. Eden. Mr. Churchill distinguished three phases of the war, of which the two latter seemed to coincide with Mr. Roosevelt's forecasts for 1942 and 1943. Modern warfare is so much a matter of mechanism that it is possible within certain limits to reduce it to arithmetical reckoning. Machines breed their kind in a calculable ratio. Mr. Roosevelt was deliberately indiscreet and published his huge figures as much to terrify the enemy as to hearten us and our friends. Even more striking was the statement that the Republic, which has hitherto spent only 15 per cent. of her vast national income on defence, will this year spend on it over 50 per cent. Mr. Roosevelt made it clear that American forces will be used in all continents, and even in Great Britain as a base.

If anything could upset this time-table it would be the continued success of the Red Army. Its most cheering performances are in the Crimea. The Black Sea Fleet has there carried out yet another successful landing operation, near Eupatoria, to the north-west of Sevastopol. With the will to do it, this sort of operation, which our own experts find so daunting in its difficulty, can succeed. The immediate task set to the forces based on Eupatoria, Feodosia and Kerch is to raise the siege of Sevastopol and drive the Germans out of the Crimea. The pace is quick, but one must remember that the Crimea, which on our little skeleton maps looks rather like the Isle of Wight, is in fact 200 miles broad. But this would be only the first stage of a much more ambitious turning operation. If the Russian Crimean army could then cross the Perekop Isthmus, while Timoshenko's men struck again between Taganrog and Mariupol, they might between them out-flank the entire Ukrainian section of the German Front and roll it up. At the lowest estimate this threat, even if it falls short of full success, is bound to alarm the German Command and upset its plans for a sedentary defence throughout the winter. Simultaneously the Red Army's counter-offensives in the centre are also going well, though the enemy, in spite of his suffering in the intense cold, is still resisting with great determination. The plan is to drive two wedges into the German line, north and south of Mojaisk. Local successes have been scored also round Leningrad. The Russians in all these operations seem to be using fresh armies, while the output of the Russian defence industries is now reaching its peak. Only in tanks is the shortage still a handicap. All this may warrant the hope that the Russians will be able to withstand the renewed attack which the Germans are no doubt planning.

How far, and if so where, shall we then be able to help them by a diversion on another front? The inferences to be drawn from the Ottawa speech are not on this subject encouraging. The only chance would seem to lie in a campaign developing out of the Libyan operations. These have for the moment come to a halt. Bardia has been retaken with 7,000 prisoners, and the chances of capturing Sollum and Helfaya, with about the same number of defenders, are good. That will ease our communications and complete the subjugation of Cyrenaica. But Rommel's main force is still intact at Jedabia, and it seems clear that fresh tanks have reached it from the West. This must mean that under German direction the Italians, doubtless with many losses, can still get through our blockade. From the Pacific there is no new tendency in the sombre news, nor must we expect any for a considerable time. It is satisfactory that all arms are now, in each area, under a single command. Thus General Wavell in the Western region has under him the American Admiral Hart. The few American warships in Philippine waters have made good their escape, which means that the heavily outnumbered land forces left behind can offer little more than a guerilla resistance. In Malaya the British continue to fall back towards Singapore. Very belatedly the sahibs who govern its mainly Chinese population have begun to co-operate with the Kuo-min-tang, our ally's ruling party. While the Japs got at Penang one of the world's two chief tin smelters, intact with a fleet of small ships, it is said that the abandoned mines round Ipoh are being flooded. The Chinese, meanwhile, have scored a success at Changsha, which enables them still to deny to the Japs the use of the Canton-Hankow railway.

In spite of these events in the Pacific area, the military perspective disclosed in the Churchill-Roosevelt pronouncements is more encouraging. The most disturbing feature of them was the passage towards the end of the Ottawa speech in which Mr. Churchill seemed to rely mainly, but not exclusively, on bombing to crush Germany in 1943. The suggestion is still that she can be reduced to ruins from the air; that done, it is conceded that a land force will be needed to occupy the *débris*. The much higher rate of acceleration disclosed by Mr. Roosevelt in the production of planes than is contemplated for tanks, bears out this interpretation. This strategy seems to us to rest on an estimate of what aerial bombardment can effect, which is now out of date. The defence is overtaking the attack: driven up into the stratosphere the bomber cannot aim accurately. The Nazis made little attempt to destroy Moscow from the air, and what little they did try failed. In time our High Command may also change its plans. But meanwhile is it not making the wrong kind of planes—many heavy bombers but few "stukas," and too few fighters with guns of a calibre that can deal with tanks? A rather more intimate contact between our soldiers and the Russians might help them to bring their strategy up to date.

An Indian Appeal

Only the other day Mr. Churchill refused Burma's request for an assurance of Dominion status after the war, on the ground that even then she would be too weak to undertake her own defence. What is passing through the minds of the Burmese to-day may be imagined, for they must rely for safety not on the Empire but on a big Chinese army and American flyers. Indians, meanwhile, have refused to despair of Mr. Churchill's conversion to realism. Fifteen distinguished Liberals, including Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Jayakar, Mr. Joshi and Mr. Sastri have cabled to Washington an appeal for a "stroke of far-sighted statesmanship." Historical imagination the Premier possesses, but hardly the gift of getting inside other men's skins.

Together these Indians represent much ability and professional skill with considerable wealth, but they have no mass following. They cannot cause inconvenience to a Government, though they might bring a blush to cheeks capable of that sign of grace. They ask for a declaration that "India will no longer be treated as a dependency ruled from Whitehall," and shall, from now onwards enjoy a constitutional position identical with that of the Dominions. In detail this means the conversion of the Viceroy's Council into "a truly National Government," the restoration of self-government to the provinces and the right to sit as a Dominion in the war councils of the Allies, in any Imperial War Cabinet and at the Peace Conference. This deliberately shelves the unsolved constitutional problems, the Hindu-Muslim issue and the autocracy of the Princes. Reading this appeal in Washington, will Mr. Churchill be made aware, we wonder, how strongly American democracy feels about India? Or is it only with the plutocratic world of fashion that he is familiar? On the eve of Japan's attack in Hawaii, the *New Republic* mentioned what it called Mr. Churchill's "sahib mentality," as among the chief obstacles to America's entry into the war. The official Labour Party still fails, on this question of India, to justify the loyalty of its supporters.

Saul Among the Profits

It is not very often that an article in a daily newspaper can be rated as a political event. But it is difficult to regard the two double-column articles published in the *Times* at the end of last week under the title "Brakes on Production" as otherwise than political events of considerable importance. The picture presented in this comprehensive survey of why our industrial production is still 40 per cent. short of capacity, is shocking. Profoundly encouraging, on the other hand, is the fact that the *Times*—and all that that implies—should now frankly and vigorously face facts which as recently as a few weeks ago were the subject only of poorly reported speeches by Labour M.P.s and of urgent, but often disregarded, representations from the Select Committee on National Expenditure or the Shop Stewards' National Council. The attitude of the *Times* clearly results from the same ineluctable pressure of very hard facts which produced the "revolt" of the 40 M.P.s on the production issue before Christmas. That was the expression of a profound public alarm and disgust at the state of production. Yet although the "revolt" took the form of a demand for nationalisation of essential industries, a majority of its supporters were by no means inclined to stickle for any traditional socialist formula, but were ready for any formula which would meet the practical need for increased control of our dangerous industrial and financial hurly-burly. Now the *Times* has joined the revolt, and its survey can certainly stand as a basis for the widest possible agreement among people of all parties who insist that this 40 per cent. production lag can and must be eliminated.

* * *

Lord Beaverbrook, replying recently to questions about nationalisation, said: "Put your argument forward in reasoned terms, and, if it is strong enough, let it prevail." The main general statement made by the *Times* writer is that "many believe that the wisest organisation of production would be the full mobilisation and control of all our industrial resources in the national interest." And certainly the argument is put forward in reasoned terms. It deals, with a frankness astonishing in such a quarter, with the contradiction between dividends and the national interest, the workers' piece-rate troubles, the grossly inefficient working of our insufficiently controlled transport system, and the shortage of nurseries, school meals and British Restaurants. Above all, the *Times* emphasises and denounces as a major weakness in the system as it stands the "inclination to think about prospects after the war." That this is indeed an inclination as prevalent as it is disastrous among our industrialists is the commonest and bitterest complaint of the most ardent and expert of our technicians. They find a fear of "redundant plant" or other disadvantage "after the war" to be as powerful a motive in hampering productive expansion as the "inclination to think about prospects after the war" was in preventing the French Army from shelling the German occupied property of the *Comité des Forges* in the notorious Briey Basin during the last war. And it must be remembered that the "controllers" of the various industries at the Ministry of Supply are preponderantly men deeply immersed in the traditions and identified with the traditional outlook of the industries concerned. Yet the machinery for a real control is there. That is where the next "revolt" might very profitably begin.

Home Front. *(By an Industrial Correspondent.)*

I have written very little in these notes about financial questions, because in wartime finance is a secondary consideration. What matters fundamentally are the real resources of man-power, plant and machinery, and materials. But finance also matters, because it is a necessity to establish a current relationship between free incomes (after taxation), prices of goods and services, and the amount of goods and services available for consumption by the public. In the last resort, of course, the public can consume only what the Government makes available to it in real goods and services; and this holds good however large the public's money income may be. But, as long as there is an uncontrolled section, in which prices can be put up without limit, the higher the free incomes the higher will prices rise in this sector, and the greater will be the tendency for black markets to develop elsewhere. This, of course, will not happen if the public as a whole offsets any rise in incomes by equivalent savings; but it would be against nature for such a thing to be done to the full extent.

* * *

It is, however, plainly being done on a very large scale, mainly by the wage-earners in the more prosperous trades. There are probably very few rich men to-day who are not living a long way beyond their incomes—as they are bound to do unless they radically alter their way of life—but there is ample evidence that workmen whose incomes have risen above the levels to which they have been accustomed are busily putting aside for a rainy day of possible post-war unemployment. This holds good especially in the "depressed areas" of pre-war days, where the National Savings authorities find their happiest hunting grounds. The Government has deliberately chosen, as the alternative to a policy of rationing incomes, to check consumption by appeals for voluntary saving. In doing this, it has entered into an implied obligation towards the saving part of the public not to allow the value of saved money to be depreciated to more than a limited extent. Under war conditions, the extent of money depreciation is very difficult to measure in view of the numerous subsidies paid in goods of which the prices enter into the cost of living index. The removal of these subsidies would obviously send the basic costs of living rocketing upwards, quite apart from other effects of the removal of the existing price control. Officially, the cost of living has risen by about 30 per cent. since the outbreak of war; but this figure is artificially lowered by the subsidies, without which it would probably be already 40 per cent.

* * *

Now, with the war factories coming into full production and the prospect of smaller war supplies, at least for a time, from the United States, Government consumption of current output seems bound to increase; and incomes are likely to increase as well as the last resource of man-power are drawn into production. This evidently creates a situation in which uncontrolled prices will tend to rise slowly, and there will be increased pressure to buy the limited supplies of controlled goods—in short, a situation with potentially inflationary features. We may suppose that the Government will meet this by curtailment of consumers' supplies, by an intensified savings campaign, and perhaps by still higher taxation; but of these measures only direct curtailment of supplies is really to be relied upon.

* * *

Herbert Morrison's Committee on the problem of making a new electoral roll and a new distribution of parliamentary seats is said not to mean that we are to have a General Election either during or immediately after the war, but to be a necessary measure of preparation, irrespective of when the election is to be. My own view is that I should like preparations to be made not only for a new permanent register used for redistribution, but also for the holding, if necessary, of an emergency election on a purely emergency basis. My notion would be that we should keep the existing constituencies, but allow any person over 21 years of age to vote in any constituency he or she pleases, on presentation of his or her National Registration Card, or any other identification card. Voting more than once would be prevented by stamping the card. There is a perfectly simple method by which we could have a General Election at any time from now on, with every adult in the country able to vote with a minimum of formality, and yet with quite adequate safeguards against dual voting. Will Mr. Morrison please consider the notion, even if it is beyond the terms of reference of the Committee, which can usefully occupy itself with devising proper machinery for the next election but one?

ADVERTISED GOODS.—The fact that goods made of raw materials in short supply owing to war conditions are advertised in this paper should not be taken as an indication that they are necessarily available for export.

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RUSSIA AND BRITAIN

Soviet and British workers meet in English arms factories; in every part of the country cheers for the Soviet Union come from Conservative as well as from Labour circles; Mr. Eden returns after a hard voyage to Moscow to tell us that the British Government has reached complete agreement with Stalin about the conduct of the war. He adds that he regards his discussion with Stalin about post-war collaboration as no less important than immediate military collaboration, though, of course, detailed agreements cannot be made without the consultation of other Allies.

There will be no disposition to doubt agreement about the conduct of the war. Some eyebrows, however, will be raised when Mr. Eden promises post-war collaboration. Mr. Eden himself explains that Russian and British interests do not clash; we need not, he suggests, take exception to the political and economic system of any country unless that system affects its foreign policy. If it is still necessary to reassure the Conservative Party about the Russian alliance, Mr. Eden is wise in explaining that Stalin is thinking about destroying Hitler's armies and safeguarding Socialism in Russia and not about embroiling the world after the war by fostering international communism. Mr. Eden, however, can scarcely be simple enough to believe the whole of his own generalisation. How is it possible to argue that the Nazi system was only important to us when it affected the foreign policy of Germany? The distinction is illusory. Fascism is a system of internal organisation which has as its object external expansion. In one essential aspect it is the creation of industrial monopolies which demand new markets and new sources of material and labour. The owners of these expanding industries may, in that event, prove either the masters or the servants of the disciplined militant Party which they helped to bring into being. In any case, it will be obsessed with an aggressive nationalism or racial imperialism which may lead to results far beyond those desired by the industrialists themselves. The foreign policy is itself an expression of an internal order, the doping of the masses, the militant psychology, the centralised economy and the racial and military doctrine. Mr. Eden must be aware that foreign policy grows from internal structure. He could not seriously maintain his proposition in face of the examples of Japan, Italy and Germany. But we have no doubt that he is sincere in applying this generalisation to the prospects of future friendship between capitalist Britain and the Soviet Union.

Talk with Stalin has obviously confirmed Mr. Eden in the view that he has held ever since his earlier visit to Moscow during the days when there still seemed a chance of saving the League of Nations. Stalin's victory over the Trotskyist view of continuous revolution was, for better or worse, one of the most important decisions in modern history. The Soviet Union, with its vast territories and still only half developed resources, has plenty to do in creating a Union of Soviet Republics which would in time be impregnable and an example to the rest of the world of prosperity and intelligent organisation. No doubt Stalin is convinced that the ultimate goal is world socialism. But according to his interpretation of Marx, it is for each nation to reach socialism by its own route. America, Britain and every capitalist state will be driven into a revolutionary situation by its own contradictions. It is not for the U.S.S.R. to jeopardise the results of her own revolution by stirring up abortive movements in countries in which the workers are not ready for power. Stalin's policy is, therefore, to be interpreted wholly in terms of the Soviet revolution; the post-war factors which Stalin would wish to discuss with Mr. Eden were, we assume, mainly the strategic frontiers of the U.S.S.R. and the prevention of future aggression. No doubt, as Mr. Eden says, some of these factors concern other Powers. Stalin will certainly wish to include Bessarabia and the Baltic States in the U.S.S.R. —it was on this issue that our negotiations with Russia finally broke down in 1939. He will want a block of States necessarily friendly to Russia to lie between a weakened Germany and the vast might of the U.S.S.R. He will be ready, we should suppose, to sit in conference with representatives of British and American business for the job of policing the world and preventing the rise in future of aggressive militarisms, such as Germany and Japan. On such immediate issues of the post-war settlement it seems unlikely that any conflict need arise between the U.S.S.R. and this country or the United States.

To-day the danger of friction between the chief members of the Grand Alliance against Fascism comes not from the U.S.S.R., nor we believe to-day from the British ruling-class, which has at length discovered that its own security depends on Russian power; it comes perhaps more from big business interests in the United States, whose conception of their own sphere of profit has no narrower boundaries than the habitable globe. It is the part of British statesmanship at the moment—and we believe that Mr. Eden admirably suits the role—to strengthen the alliance between Britain and Russia, and in so doing to bring American business into a closer realisation of the necessities and the possibilities of our understanding with the U.S.S.R., both during and after the war.

It is a mistake to ask, as many people do, whether Stalin is still an apostle of world revolution as well as a Soviet statesman. As a Communist he certainly believes in the ultimate triumph of world socialism, but that his own task is to safeguard the revolution in Russia. Germany has proved the immediate menace to that security, and Stalin will act, as he always acts, with a grim and ruthless realism whenever he sees any threat to the Soviet Union. It is not in the nature of Communist doctrine to hold the Vansittart view of any foreign people. No Communist can believe in the innate wickedness of a nation, since national characteristics are the products of environment not of any racial ingredient. The Russian revolution is itself the product of defeat in war, and every Communist has lived through a period of hope and disappointment when it was discovered that the hopes of world revolution after the last war would not be fulfilled. Therefore, as Mr. Andrew Rothstein has urged in the controversy now going on in our correspondence columns, Russian propaganda to Germany and abroad has insisted throughout on the appeal to the individual worker against the Nazis; the text of the British-Russian pact of July 12th declares that we fight a joint war against "Hitlerite Germany." This phrase, agreed upon between Stalin and Mr. Churchill, has been repeated in a number of public documents and speeches in which Stalin has insisted that the war must end with the liberation of the German masses.

It is of course possible, as our correspondence columns show, to find in the home propaganda of the Soviet Union phrases which suggest an indescriminate hatred of Germans. This is not surprising in an invasion, when home propaganda is designed to rouse the people to the maximum resistance to the invader. It has not been possible, when German armies were sweeping over their homes, always to tell Russian peasants to make distinctions between one Nazi inside a tank and another who might still be converted into a revolutionary against the Hitler regime. It is surprising in the circumstances how persistently the distinction between "Germans" as such and "Fascist invaders and "Hitlerite" armies was maintained in the daily broadcasts from Moscow when the German armies were almost at the gates of Moscow. An army must be met and defeated as a whole: a people, as Stalin well knows, and especially a people in defeat can be divided into many groups; it is the object of Russian propaganda to divide the German people from its Government as soon as possible.

Some of the early accounts of the new document dealing with German atrocities issued from Moscow this week were highly misleading. In fact, the full text of this indictment, bitter and vengeful in tone as it is, maintains to the end the distinction between the German people and Hitlerite Germany which is to be punished for its cruelties and prevented from ever again invading neighbouring peoples. We should urge that words like "revenge" and "punishment" are not in fact good Marxism; it was the peculiar distinction of the U.S.S.R. that instead of these infantile conceptions, it insisted that national and individual wrong-doing were the product of circumstances, and must be cured by scientific change of environment. The world to-day is more than ever in need of this realistic and scientific approach. If every German were to be killed to-morrow we should be no nearer solving the problems of peace and war; we should still need an economic and social organisation which would prevent aggression (Japanese no less than German!); we should still have failed to begin to make good the promise to end the system of "fear and want."

IS AUSTRALIA THREATENED?

(The writer of this article was formerly Principal Information Officer in the Australian department of Information, and is now on the London staff of *Truth* Newspapers, of Australia and New Zealand, and of the *Daily Mirror*, of Sydney.)

It requires a clearer conception of Pacific geography than perhaps the average Englishman possesses to understand the reality of the threat of invasion now overhanging Australia. Twice the size of the Atlantic, the Pacific is an ocean of immense distances, and close, intimate contacts. Its great distances have created for each of the principal Pacific Powers a measure of naval isolation such as is to be found nowhere else, and, combined with the confined, almost crowded nature of its vital south-west quadrant, have complicated strategical and tactical problems and made air superiority of prime importance.

Already Manila has fallen and the Japanese are virtual masters of the Philippines; they hold British North Borneo and Sarawak, and in Malaya their southward drive, daily grows nearer Singapore. If they also succeed in seizing Dutch Borneo and Sumatra, on opposite sides of Singapore, they will have achieved their strategical design of being positioned for their next move. It would seem that they would then have the choice of two alternatives. First, they could launch a three-pronged attack against the naval base at the entrance to the narrow, but important, Straits of Malacca, or, secondly, they could closely invest the island fortress, separated from the Malayan mainland by the mile-wide Straits of Johore, and, by-passing it, press southwards to Australia. Necessary

preliminaries to either move are the occupation of Java and the capture of the Dutch naval base of Sourabaya, and the securing of unchallengeable air superiority.

With the Japanese firmly occupying Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, and dominating the skies, it is difficult to see how Singapore would be capable of prolonged resistance; but even if it holds out beyond our most sanguine expectations, its defence is unlikely to avert invasion for Australia. At best, by immobilising substantial Japanese forces, particularly aircraft, in its investment, it can but weaken the weight of the Japanese blow and complicate the Japanese problem of transport and supply. Its real value lies in another direction. So long as we hold it, the use of the Straits of Malacca, the shortest route to the Indian Ocean, will be denied to the Japanese, just as their occupation of Sumatra would deny its use to us. They would be forced to use other entrances, the most important of which is the Strait of Sunda, between Sumatra and Java.

Their attack against Australia would almost certainly be launched from the Netherlands East Indies and the other islands lying to the north of the Commonwealth. Only in the unlikely event of having defeated the Allied fleets in a great naval action would they attempt to bring an invading force across the thousands of miles of ocean separating Australia from Japan and the Philippines.

Australia has a coastline of some 12,000 miles, but to regard the whole of this as exposed and vulnerable is to reveal ignorance of the facts. Many stretches of it are entirely unsuited to hostile landings; others are too remote from worthwhile strategic objectives to invite enemy attention. But a sufficient choice of suitable landing-places remains for the Japanese to strike simultaneously at a dozen different points. In the actual event, their strategic plan would depend upon their command of shipping resources, and the speed with which they could seize the Netherlands East Indies, Timor, Papua, New Guinea, New Caledonia, and other islands for use as bases. The number, weight and direction of their blows would be determined by the ships available to them.

Their first objective would unquestionably be the seizure of aerodromes on Australia's mainland. Darwin and certain parts of Northern Queensland are within bombing range of Timor, Papua or New Guinea; the lower coast of Queensland, including the capital of Brisbane, and parts of the New South Wales coast, possibly even Sydney, could be reached from New Caledonia, but this Free French island has no land aerodrome and could be used only by long-range flying-boats. Airfields and bases further south would be required before the Japanese could strike effectively at the concentrated industrial centres of New South Wales and Victoria, upon which, in the final analysis, the power of Australian resistance depends. For this reason the Japanese would probably repeat their Malayan tactics, and launch simultaneous landings, after heavy aerial bombardment, at such points as Darwin, Cairns and Townsville, afterwards seeking to drive down Australia's new strategic highway to Adelaide from Darwin, and, with the forces from Cairns and Townsville, down the Queensland coastal belt towards Brisbane. There are other factors which would almost certainly cause Japan to strike first in the North. Unlike Borneo and the Dutch East Indies, Australia is not an oil producer, and supplies of oil fuel, both for aircraft and mechanised vehicles, would have to be brought up by the enemy. The second factor is that on the Queensland canefields between Cairns and Townsville, and even further south, there is a considerable foreign population, largely of Italian origin, which is likely to provide fifth column assistance. The Japanese, as a result of the incursions of their sampans over a long period of years, have a very intimate knowledge of the northern coasts; they may have more accurate and detailed charts of these waters than even Australia herself.

But even if the Japanese delivered their main blow in the North, it would almost certainly be accompanied by landings and air attacks, possibly even naval bombardments, elsewhere. The paucity of Australian rail and road communications, the break of gauge between the railway systems of the different States, her lack of adequate numbers of tanks and aircraft, the absence overseas of her best-trained, best-equipped troops—all these factors complicate Australia's task in countering manifold and widely-separated blows. It is probable, indeed, that she would have to abandon much of her territory before forming her main defence line.

The plain fact is that Australia's best defence lies in denying Malaya and the Dutch East Indies to the Japanese. If these can be held, any large-scale invasion of the Commonwealth would be too hazardous for the Japanese to attempt. Britain naturally feels under a moral obligation to assist Australia to the fullest possible extent, since the Commonwealth unhesitatingly participated in the Middle East campaigns, particularly Greece and Crete, and despatched hundreds of her trained airmen and much-needed materials to England, thereby weakening her defences at home. But stark realities, not ethics and moral obligations, must govern strategical decisions. The Allies' principal opponent remains Germany, without whose overthrow no victory can be won, and it is against Germany that the main weight of Britain's armed might must be thrown. She could, however, greatly minimise, if not wholly eliminate, the threat to Australia by invading Thailand and severing Japanese land communications with Malaya. But such a move would be valueless unless carried out with sufficient forces and sufficient vigour to make success certain. Failing this, Malaya and the Dutch East Indies must be reinforced, not with a mere dribble of forces, but overwhelmingly. The defences here are likely to prove tougher than our early reverses appear to indicate, and provided we act boldly and daringly, there may yet be time to stem the tide.

But it is to the United States and Russia, as Mr. Curtin has bluntly announced, that Australia really looks, and the presence of American warships with the Dutch Indies fleet is heartening. Despite her unpreparedness, the United States can help materially to strengthen the defence of these islands and even of Australia herself. But Russia's logical preoccupation with the Eastern front may prevent the Soviet effectively intervening at this juncture. Ultimately, however, her creation of a Siberian front against Japan, and her launching of bombing raids against the Japanese mainland from Vladivostock would be the most decisive factor in Japan's defeat.

The indisputable fact that Nazi Germany is our main enemy must not blind us to the realities of the Pacific danger. If Australia and the rich islands to its north are lost, we shall be deprived of substantial supplies of raw materials. True, the pursuit of a scorched earth policy may render these useless to the Japanese, but the loss will be ours none the less, and our position against the Axis will be weakened. Similarly, if the Japanese break through into the Indian Ocean, our position in the Middle East and India will be weakened, if not directly menaced, and our task of defeating the Axis correspondingly made more difficult.

HENRY BATESON

DECENTRALISE PRODUCTION

In face of the Prime Minister's determined opposition, the public demand for a Minister of Production has temporarily died down, and attention has been diverted to the problems raised by the new Man-Power Act and the associated proposal for "war nationalisation" of the essential industries. But this does not mean that the need for co-ordinated control of production has become less. On the contrary, it is greater than ever now that the combined needs of the Russians and of the Americans themselves have necessarily reduced the quantity of supplies that we can expect to get in the near future from the United States. The new conditions enforce upon us both a severer economy in the use of non-essential goods and services, combined with a more determined effort to maximise war output, and also a better considered system of priorities between the rival claimants to a share in the scarce supplies of materials and of finished goods.

Hitherto, those who have pleaded for a unified Ministry of War Production have been met with the answer that the Ministries of Supply and Aircraft Production and the supply section of the Admiralty are overloaded already, and that any attempt to combine them into a single department could only result in topheaviness and inefficiency. To anyone who knows the working of the ministries, this argument can hardly fail to make a strong appeal. The Ministry of Supply, in particular, has so vast a mass of work to deal with that it would be plainly out of the question to place further duties on the persons at its head, or to expand it into a general Ministry of War Production along the existing lines.

But—and this is the essential point, which has been stressed much too little in most discussions of the question—this top-heavy and congested condition of the Ministry of Supply and, to a smaller extent, of the other ministries concerned, is not a natural and unavoidable consequence of the scale of the war effort, but the outcome of a radically faulty policy. The supply departments are top-heavy and congested mainly because they are over-centralised, and are trying to do at headquarters many things that could be done very much better on a regional or on a local basis.

There has been in recent months a very little recognition of this fact. It was recognised in form when the Area Boards, previously associated mainly with the Ministry of Supply, were transformed into Regional Boards with a wider reference and were brought under the auspices of the Production Executive. It was also recognised when encouragement was given to the creation of local Capacity Clearing Exchanges, with the special object of securing a fuller utilisation of scarce machine tools, which were often standing idle in one factory while the want of their services was holding up production in a factory near by. These were salutary changes; but those who have had the working of them would be among the first to agree that they have done little to reduce the congestion at the centre, for the simple reason that this congestion proceeds from major policies which cannot be much altered without a fundamental change in the entire relationship between the State and the private businesses subject to war control.

The root of the evil lies in the centralisation of the placing of war contracts. London is still the place where big contracts are got, and arrangements made between the Government and the representatives of industry. This centralisation of the key function of contract-making proceeds quite naturally from the methods by which the

State used to place its contracts in time of peace; and this in turn proceeded quite naturally from the structure of private capitalist enterprise. For private capitalism in the great industries knows for the most part no local frontiers. The great business firms have factories all over the country, and often transport their goods over long distances in the course of production. It is no uncommon thing for components needed on the Clyde to be made under the same financial control in the South of England or the Midlands, or for a single big contract to involve work carried out by the same firm in half a dozen different regions. Moreover, in some of the essential industries, the separate firms are further joined together in great combines which play a vital part in the distribution of orders: so that the State deals in effect not with single firms, but with the representatives of huge unified sections of industry.

Under these conditions, the most natural thing is for the State, when it comes to be the principal buyer, to make most of its arrangements on a national basis with the great firms and combines. This is what these bodies want, both because it fits in best with their own highly centralised organisation, and also because it enables them to become intermediaries in dealing, on the State's behalf, with a host of smaller firms which they employ as sub-contractors. This method increases their power, and puts them in a strong position of vantage—the stronger because their leading experts usually become the controllers in the Ministries concerned, and they have therefore the congenial chance of negotiating mainly with themselves.

The most serious disadvantages of this centralised system become fully apparent only when the stage is reached at which it becomes vital fully to mobilise the resources of the smaller independent businesses, including a great many which are very small indeed. Plainly, the right basis for this mobilisation is local—the putting together into a combined productive unit of the scattered resources of a large number of local small businesses. But this method cuts right across the method of centralisation previously employed; for the big firms will oppose strongly any attempt to treat their own resources, or those of the sub-contractors of whom they have been making use, as forming part of any local pool of resources available for mobilisation on a local or regional basis; whereas, if these are excluded, the possibility of effective local organisation of production to a great extent disappears. Local Capacity Exchanges can operate only to a very limited extent under these conditions; and anything approaching a local production plan based on local placing of orders by a decentralised government authority is altogether ruled out.

This is in effect the impasse which has been reached in the attempts at decentralisation that have been made so far. It furnishes the strongest argument in favour of the public wartime ownership, not of all the munition factories, but at any rate of those which belong to the big centralised firms and combines. If the effective control of these could be secured, in such a way that the various establishments could be sorted out, when convenient, into unified regional groups, it would be possible both to save a good deal of unnecessary transport and, still more, of waiting for the arrival of components from some distant factory, and to link the smaller firms together round a plan based on the thoroughly co-ordinated use of the bigger local establishments.

Needless to say, this solution would be fought tooth and nail by many representatives of big business. It would destroy the huge power units which they have been building up largely for monopolist ends. It would create conditions highly favourable to a continuance of State control over big business after the war, and highly unfavourable to a control of big business over the State. It might easily give a quite different twist to the entire controversy over nationalisation, by demonstrating in practice the virtues of a system under which the State would own only the great monopolistic concerns, and would leave the small and middle-sized businesses to carry on under private ownership within a general plan based on the right use of the major concerns.

But that the scheme here proposed would be fought hard by big business is nothing against it—though it may be much in the minds of Ministers and leading Civil Servants whose most frequent contacts are with big business rather than with the small or middle-sized employers. It is perhaps the most serious fault of the existing centralised system that it causes Ministers and Civil Servants to mistake the great financiers who manipulate the large firms and combines for the representatives of British industry. These men are in truth the feudal Barons of industrialism, and not the trusty Commons, who find themselves under the prevailing conditions almost wholly excluded from the discussion of economic policies deeply affecting their fate. Regionalism and localism in the organisation of the productive effort would bring them more into their own, and would enable them to work closely with the salaried managers of the local works belonging to the great combines—their real opposite numbers in relation to production problems.

Finally, if the organisation of production were decentralised in this way, the case against a unified Ministry of Production would disappear; for the task of central co-ordination would be made manageable by doing away with the congestion at the centre. Proper co-ordination of the economic effort, so far from involving more top-heaviness, depends on doing away with the top-heaviness that is inherent in the present relationship between the State and the great firms and combines. Once regionalise the control of production, and we shall be far on the way to sorting out the muddle at the centre as well.

A LONDON DIARY

THE House of Commons, as a Member remarked this week, meets in a new atmosphere. It rose before Christmas in a state of indignation and anxiety; events in Malaya and the discovery that there was still confusion about aerodrome defence in this country as well as in the Pacific combined with other causes of dissatisfaction to produce a temper, especially among Conservatives, that looked like forcing a radical reconstruction of the Government. M.P.s insisted on meeting again before the Government wanted them to. Now in the recess a Grand Alliance has come into existence. Churchill has made speeches at Washington and Ottawa, Eden has been to Moscow, and Wavell has been put in charge of the Pacific fighting. Inevitably the anger of December is somewhat dissipated. There will be a lot of cheering, anyway, before criticism begins. And the Government has very sensibly forestalled trouble about the divided defence of aerodromes by passing it over to the R.A.F. Recent changes also show that they wish to avoid the frontal attack on rubber Control that seemed to be brewing.

* * *

Rumour has frequently been busy with the name of Stafford Cripps. This time, I suspect, the rumour has more substance behind it. He has accomplished his principal mission in Moscow and it would not surprise me if he returned to this country. If he does he will arrive with a unique reputation. When he last visited Britain the *Times*, with unusual precipitancy, suggested his entry into the Cabinet—which was remarkable enough if one recalls how often previous articles in the *Times* had assigned him to a very different destination. If he comes back to England now or in the near future, he will have the additional prestige of having represented Britain in one of the few capitals where, after many failures, British policy may be said to have succeeded. Putting it at its lowest, a temporary understanding between London and Moscow now exists, and Stafford Cripps must be given some of the credit. He held on without disaster through two extremely difficult years. In this country he would be unique—a political figure of the first rank whom no one could blame as responsible for any of our various types of disaster during the last three years. Most groups would angle for him, except perhaps the Labour Party machine, which is scarcely likely to forgive a public man who has been more successful after it has expelled him.

* * *

I have in front of me the very moderate letter written by Heinrich Fraenkel in reply to a surprisingly mean attack on him by a Mr. Peter Weiner in the *Sunday Times*. This letter quoted Fraenkel's book to illustrate Weiner's thesis that "there are still some refugees about to-day who do not hide for a moment that their only concern is Germany's greatness and splendid future." He quotes Fraenkel as saying that he and his friends "can claim no other stake" than "their love and loyalty to what will ever be the true heritage of Germany and the Germans." He seems to think that this proves he is no ally of ours. In his reply, which the *Sunday Times* has not published, Fraenkel gives the full quotation with the words (italicised) which Wiener omitted. He writes:

> Actually, in the book he misquotes from I included myself (and still proudly do) among those "who can claim no other stake *in the Germany to come than their hatred of what Nazism has made of our country*, and their love and loyalty of what will ever be the true heritage of Germany and the Germans."

It is difficult to see how any sane or decent person could find fault with this statement. What ought a German to want except the end of Hitlerite Germany (to quote the official phrase) and the restoration of a Germany in which the compatriots of Goethe and Heine can again feel proud?

* * *

When the pathology of this war comes to be written the *Sunday Times* will deserve very careful analysis. How does Lord Kemsley reconcile his record as one of the foremost appeasers with a propaganda designed to suggest that no German can be a friend of Britain? It would be interesting to cross-examine Lord Kemsley on his views on Germany, Russia and Japan. Japan, by the way, was, until the war, even more appeasable in the eyes of the *Sunday Times* than Germany; and as for an alliance with the U.S.S.R. . . ! One might forget all this if the *Sunday Times* did not every week so truculently trail a Vansittart coat.

* * *

I went into one of the largest bookshops in London the other day to buy a copy of a well-known classic. It wasn't there; like most of the books that people want, as they never wanted books before, it was out of print. Instead, on the shelves of World's Classics and Everyman I

saw classics of the most minor kind, forgotten works of Dickens and Charles Kingsley, and a fine show of Austen Dobson. It reminded one of the few bottles on a shelf that now, in many restaurants, take the place of a wine-list: soon, no doubt, we shall all be reading Austen Dobson as he has never been read before. Well, it is one thing to see our drinks draining away, but reading—and the supply of the best books for that purpose—is another matter. Such reading is not a luxury, but a necessity. We have the British Council to provide for this necessity in various ways, but when it comes to the point the idiot-cry "No Culture in war-time" seems to prevail. The *Times* last week printed a letter, signed by a number of distinguished writers, who are alarmed by the shortage of books and the threat to publishing. An increase, they point out, of 1½ per cent. in the paper allowance to publishers would ease the situation—not too much to ask. All the paper required could easily be saved by curtailing the unnecessary advertisements of which some periodicals are still so prodigal, advertisements of products that either cannot be obtained or do not need advertisement. Many are invitations to disregard the Government appeal, and spend unnecessarily. Publishers' advertisements are among the few that convey new and necessary information. Let me give one example. The *Radio Times* early in November published a quarter-page advertisement of fireworks. The advertisement said that, of course, no one could buy or use fireworks on Guy Fawkes Night, 1941, but that after the war . . . The paper used for this advertisement is equivalent to half the paper used for an entire issue of this journal with a forty-five thousand circulation.

* * *

An article called "Give Us the Tools," by A. L. N. D. Houghton, of the Board of Inland Revenue, makes a fervent appeal for the reform of income-tax collection. The task of assessment, which is carried out from October to December, is enormously increased by the addition of millions of new income-tax payers. "Twenty-five thousand men and women, thousands of whom are under thirty, are employed in the income-tax offices. Young men who have been chafing for months to get into the Forces are held fast"—and why? Because the system, little changed since 1842, is impeded by "wasteful, useless, meaningless and archaic ritual." For instance, notices are posted on church doors: "waste of good drawing-pins," says Mr. Houghton; forms are duplicated, recopied, delayed, lost. As to remedies, a Director of Income Tax Administration is suggested with Regional Directors. It is remarkable to find the staff of a Government department fighting for reform against the "dead hand of Sir Robert Peel."

* * *

The London Labour Party has a good list of speakers for its series of Saturday afternoon lectures at the Essex Hall. There are Party stalwarts like John Wilmot, George Hicks, Arthur Greenwood (on "A Starving Europe: How to Prevent it"), and Herbert Morrison. There is G. D. H. Cole opening the series on January 10th on "The Problem of Demobilisation and Re-employment after the War." On March 7th Francis Williams (once financial editor, then editor of the *Herald*, and now Chief Press Censor) is speaking on "U.S.S.R., U.S. and Us"; and Harold Butler, formerly Director-General of the I.L.O., is talking about International Labour. It will be seen that the course aims less at cheering on the Party than at informing and educating a public which should include many who are not already supporters. The most unusual lecture is Prof. Hogben's on February 14th; he is speaking on "Language Obstacles to International Co-operation."

* * *

The following example of conditions in the A.T.S. may not be typical, but it is authentic. A friend of mine met an A.T.S. lorry-driver, exhausted after two days of driving in convoy. The night was spent by the women drivers in a comfortless camp. They got up at five, washed in buckets of water they had to fill in the pitch dark from a small stream, filled their radiators from the same source, and drove away at 6 a.m. They drove till 4 p.m. with half-an-hour's break in which they were given one cup of tea each; but no food. The army driver, a cheerful soul, did not complain. Asked if the A.T.S. did not provide luncheon-packets. "Oh no!" she said. "We used to get sandwiches from our billet-landladies, but the tale went round that they talked when we went on a long duty, and we were forbidden to ask them for food to carry with us." Driving brand-new lorries, not driven-in, is heavy work for women; even if they are experienced drivers, which many of the A.T.S. are not. Driving in convoy is a straining experience. Peace-time lorry drivers are liable to prosecution—and are constantly prosecuted—if they drive for longer than five hours without a rest-break and food, as that period is considered the limit of safety.

* * *

A maternity hospital serving large numbers of the families of sailors, soldiers and airmen, was evacuated from London early in the war and has functioned until recently in a large country house, surrounded by a huge and beautiful park, at Eynsham—ideal conditions for its purpose. Suddenly, a few weeks ago, the hospital was evicted from its premises. Paramount military necessity? By no means. The incoming tenant, accorded priority by the Office of Works, was Barclays Bank Ltd. Ledgers are more important than the babies of fighting men. CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

A 5 - prize for the first entry in this column goes to Geoffrey Faber.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

It is now possible to reveal that Gen. Sir Henry Pownall, C.-in-C., Far East, has visited Singapore's secret defensive fortifications, which it will be his responsibility to maintain.

Nothing has been withheld from him. Not only the secret but even the ultra-secret fortifications have been shown to him.—Special correspondent in *The Daily Telegraph*.

At the recent conference of public health nurses held at Birmingham, an industrial nurse stated that out of 58 people who failed to pass their works doctor because of the lousy condition of their hair, 28 preferred to give notice rather than go to a cleansing station that had been set up. The chief objection to going there was a loss of "waves" and "curls," because, after treatment, the hair became straight.—Reported in *Better Health* (The Official Journal of Central Council for Health Education).

An old lady living at Wimbledon has sent a hot water bottle to the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey's Comforts Fund, with instructions that it should be sent to Stalin.—*The Yorkshire Evening Post*.

BREAD

THE Ministry of Food have fixed a new scale of prices for home-grown wheat, designed to induce farmers to thresh early. The highest price (15s. 9d. per cwt.) is payable in February and March. From then on, the price will fall gradually. The Ministry explain this action—which will cause great inconvenience to farmers—by stating that "during the next few months it will be necessary to use the greatest possible amount of shipping for other vital purposes."

This is the first indication that the entry of Japan into the war will affect our food situation. It will certainly not be the last. What steps will the Ministry take to meet the new difficulties? If this instruction to farmers is an indication of the path they intend to follow, it is anything but reassuring. Shipping cannot be saved by using our home wheat stocks early. Such a course only postpones the trouble. Will the Ministry at last grasp the nettle and put their own preaching into practice? They have told us over and over again that we can save shipping by eating wholemeal bread—in other words, by increasing the extraction of flour to 85 per cent. instead of the present level of 73 per cent. Are they going to do it? If not, why not? The history of wheat, flour and bread in the Ministry's hands does not inspire confidence.

No one has yet been able to solve the great B1 mystery. Early in the war, Professor J. C. Drummond became Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Food. Professor Drummond, in all his published writings, has been a staunch advocate of wholemeal, or (as the Ministry call it) wheatmeal bread. He has consistently urged that the properties contained in the wheat germ, of which Vitamin B1 is the most important element that scientists have so far discovered, ought to be retained in flour. Present milling practice eliminates it in order to produce a white flour. Practically all scientists and doctors agree with Professor Drummond. One voice has lately been heard on the other side saying (*a*) that the natural B1 in high extraction flour (85 per cent or over) is not assimilated; and (*b*) that if it is assimilated it is apt to loosen the bowels. This argument is surely a boomerang, seeing that constipation is one of the curses of the urban population of these islands.

Lord Horder, appointed Personal Scientific Adviser to Lord Woolton some months ago, is an ardent supporter of wholemeal bread. Presumably his opinion carries some weight with Lord Woolton. But even without the benefit of his advice, the Ministry of Food admitted the claims of the British public to its modicum of B1 in bread, more than a year ago. Mr. Boothby, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry, was privileged to announce in the House of Commons that the bread of the people would at some future date contain the right quantity of B1. Not, he explained, the natural B1 contained in the wheat germ. The millers would continue to remove that. But a beneficent Ministry would insert in its place a synthetic B1 which would be supplied by Roche Products, Ltd., and other factories, as soon as the former had accumulated stocks and the latter had begun production. When would our bread be so fortified? He hoped in the Spring of 1941. Delays of various kinds have belied this hope. So far, only the fortunate inhabitants of South Wales have benefited.

When asked why he allowed B1 to be extracted from flour by the millers, only to be inserted again at some future date by manufacturers, Lord Woolton explained that the public did not like wholemeal bread, and any form of compulsion

was contrary to his principles. It does not seem to have been pointed out to him that food rationing was compulsory, so that his principles had already been thrust aside by the necessities of war.

Next, the Ministry of Food tried to persuade the public to like wholemeal bread, although Lord Woolton had based his policy on the assumption that they never would. A huge campaign was launched, with all the ballyhoo of commercial publicity. Thousands of pounds of public money was spent. The slogan was that by eating wholemeal bread we should save shipping. One may ask what would have become of the factories piling up synthetic B1 at the nation's expense, if this campaign had succeeded. But it did not succeed.

One fatal drawback was the fact that most of the people who were induced to ask for National Wheatmeal bread could not get it. Those who did very soon discovered that the quality varied very greatly and that many loaves contained an unexpected admixture of bran. Bakers who established some regular demand for it found that deliveries of the flour were slow and irregular. The more logical section of the public felt that if this bread saved shipping space, it was up to the Ministry to do the saving by compelling the millers to increase their extraction to 85 per cent. And so the great campaign fizzled out and died.

But the new instruction to farmers inevitably brings the question up again. If it is necessary to force farmers to thresh their wheat at a time when good husbandry demands the use of the available threshing machinery for other purposes, then either our wheat stocks must be dangerously low or else our shipping position must be bad. In either event early threshing does not provide a permanent remedy. What is the solution? The Ministry of Food can do one of three things. It can increase extraction to 85 per cent., or higher. It can restrict the consumption of bread by rationing. It can add potato flour to "white" flour, thus adulterating the already emasculated loaf.

Which of these three courses will Lord Woolton take? Or can he find a fourth one?

It has been difficult to follow the Ministry through the Bread Labyrinth during the past year. Have we a thread to guide us through the mazes of its mind? Or should we perhaps look elsewhere and ask ourselves what influences are at work, whose profits would shrink, whose machinery would become redundant, whose post-war good-will would diminish, if extraction were increased by fifteen or ten per cent?

BIRD STORIES

I was talking the other day to a woman who told me of a duck that was born feeble-minded and, as a result, walked backwards. That seemed to me an extraordinary thing—the most extraordinary thing I had ever heard about a duck. I mentioned it to a man the next day, however, only to be told: "Ah, yes; that's quite common. My sister had a feeble-minded duck like that. Always walked backwards and waggled." It is strange how one can go through decade after decade of life in ignorance of facts that everybody else seems to know. I should have thought that a duck that could walk backwards was as rare as a sheep that could climb trees. But perhaps it is usual for sheep to climb trees. There is no end to the things of which one cannot be certain.

As I thought over the matter, I could not help reflecting how few are the stories that are told about ducks. Animal stories are numerous—so numerous that, if you opened the correspondence column of a newspaper to them, letters would pour in on you telling of the unprecedented behaviour of some cat or dog or cockatoo. Every cat is an individual cat. It differs from all other cats in, say, liking mustard with cheese or in the skill with which it robs the local fishmonger. Every dog, too, is an original. I was standing in a garden overlooking a common one early afternoon last summer when a black-and-white terrier came padding along the road. "There goes Monty," said the gardener with a look of admiration, "Monty always knows when there's going to be cricket"—the field is in the middle of the common—"and, as sure as fate, he makes for the green about an hour before the match starts. If there was no match to-day, Monty wouldn't be going up the road." "How can he tell?" I asked. "Ah," said the gardener, "that's a mystery. But Monty always knows." The fifty per cent. of the population who believe in the more than human intelligence of dogs will find no difficulty in accepting the gardener's statement. I accept it myself but explain it away in the modern fashion as an example of telepathic communication.

The readiness of people to tell stories about cats and dogs was shown the other day when the members of the Brains Trust were asked whether they believed that animals have a sense of humour. One member after another seemed to have known a dog or cat or other pet that had done something or other suggesting that it could both make a joke and see one. It struck me as odd that all the animals cited were domestic pets, and that no evidence of a sense of humour in any of the ordinary creatures of the farmyard was offered. No one, for example, argued that a cow has a sense of humour, though a cow that kicks over a milkpail shows some of the marks of a practical joker. No one maintained that a horse has a sense of humour, though a horse's whinny is the nearest thing known in this climate to the laughter of a number of human beings. (It is true that we speak of a "horse-laugh," but a horse-laugh is not like any noise made by a horse.) No one, again, claimed a sense of humour for the turkey, the goose, the duck or the hen. (My own impression is that a turkey-cock has a sense of humour, but a turkey-hen none.)

As for ordinary hens, they seem to excite little interest in adult human beings except as aids to appetite. There is surely no animal at once more useful and more maligned than the common, back-garden hen. Time and again since the war began, initiate poultry-keepers have said to me: "Hens are so stupid." These people cage half-a-dozen hens in a small space about the size of a doll's house, and expect the birds apparently not only to lay innumerable eggs but to develop as lively an intelligence as a puppy that has the run of the countryside. I, who remember hens that had the freedom of an entire farmyard, cannot believe in the stupidity of hens. How cleverly they used to mislay their eggs in mangers and byre-lofts and even in a plantation of trees across the road! A selfish love of food brought most of them back to the neighbourhood of the hen-house, but a selfish love of food is not necessarily a mark of stupidity. Hens, I can assure the modern poultry-keeper, have much more character than is nowadays attributed to them. Yet even the poets—who are supposed to have more imaginative insight than the rest of us—seem to have seldom been moved by the contemplation of a hen. A poet has told us that four ducks on a pond with a green bank beyond are a thing

> To remember for years
> To remember with tears

No poet has ever said this of four hens in a coop or even of a flock of hens in a farmyard. Is there, indeed, any serious appreciation of the hen in poetic literature?

The duck, as the above quotation shows, has been slightly luckier. His praises have been sung both by William Allingham and by T. E. Browns Even so he has never become a theme of countles. stories among human beings, as the cat and the dog have. In order to interest them, he has to be born feeble-minded and walk backwards. I have found only one story about a duck that gives the bird credit for originality and cleverness. It tells how a duck with her family of thirteen ducklings were swimming on a pond when a rat came out of a hole and approached them. Each time the rat got near the ducklings, the mother duck drove him off. The owner of the birds, seeing this, went for his gun and shot the rat, which measured nearly a foot and a-half from his nose to the tip of his tail. Later another rat appeared, and the man with the gun had another shot at it. He only wounded it, however, but, as it was making back for its hole, the duck dashed after it, caught it in her bill, and took it out to the middle of the pond, where, though it bit her and drew blood, she held it under water and drowned it. That seems to me as remarkable a feat as was ever accomplished by a dachsund.

The only other duck of which I have ever heard as doing something original was a duck that died in Devonshire some years ago and in the gizzard of which were found two pieces of wire three inches long, fragments of a razor blade, a nail, broken glass, and coloured scraps of pottery and stone. Human beings as well as ducks, however, swallow things of this kind, and it cannot be adduced as evidence of intelligence.

The goose, on the whole, has been more fortunate than the duck or the hen in its appeal to the imagination. There were the geese that saved the Capitol, and there was the goose that laid the golden eggs. The Irish exiles, again, who sailed away to fight in half the armies of Europe at the end of the seventeenth century, were known as the Wild Geese. Thus the bird has been ennobled in legend: yet, in spite of this, to call a human being a goose to-day is to suggest that the bird is one of the most contemptible of living creatures. I cannot imagine how this disparagement of the goose originated. It may have been in the foolish saying of the gluttonous Walsall man who, on being asked whether he and his wife were going to have a goose for their Christmas dinner, replied: "A goose is a silly bird—too much for one and not enough for two." Human beings, who are the most imitative of the animals, probably after hearing this went about saying to each other: "The goose is a silly bird"; and the libel has stuck ever since. W. H. Hudson once did his best to rescue the goose from the charge of stupidity. It speaks little, however, for human intelligence that it needed a great naturalist to remind us that the birds that saved the Capitol and laid golden eggs were no morons.

The bad reputation of the goose, unhappily, has now become proverbial. If a great writer praises a number of young disciples rather indiscriminately, we say of him, "All his geese are swans," implying that the swan is a fine bird and the goose a nonentity. To me, who take the opposite view, it seems a much greater compliment to compare a young poet to a goose than to compare him to a swan. The goose has the handsomer face of the two, and its neck, I am sure, is more like Annie Laurie's than a swan's neck. White geese moving slowly above their white reflections in still water are a sight incomparable and worthy of the scrutiny of a poet. Swans I will not belittle, but I prefer farmyard poultry. We should not postpone taking an imaginative interest in them till one of them happens to be born feeble-minded and to astonish us by walking backwards.

Y. Y.

LONDON EXHIBITIONS

EVERY painter in this country is now cruelly handicapped, irrespective of any war activities in which he or she may be engaged. Not only have Rome, Paris and Madrid become as remote as the moon, but all the Old Masters here have been placed in inaccessible asylum. Thus unsuccoured, the painter, and particularly the young painter, must be expected to flounder. And, what is less important, the critic, I ruefully notice, grows unsure of his bearings, when the fixed stars have for so long been invisible. Behind every useful judgment there must ultimately be standards determined by the painting, for instance, of Piero, Rubens and Cézanne, the drawings of Raphael, Rembrandt and Degas. If I have presumed to offer my opinion about modern pictures, it is because every year I used to travel and look at masterpieces. Now one can look only at their photographs. As a result, confidence in one's own judgment (and in that of other people) continually diminishes.

The Exhibition at the National Gallery of works by Sir William Nicholson and Mr. Jack B. Yeats would in any case set the critic some posers. The "case," in Henry James parlance, of Mr. Yeats is that in his earlier pictures he described the life of County Sligo with a vivacious absorption in character that brought him near to caricature. In his later work gusto for the thing seen is drowned in gusto for the means of expression. Whether he has felt the influence of such painters as Kokoschka I do not know—he may well have invented on his own similar methods. (Van Dongen, I fear, is another painter of whom he sometimes reminds me.) He paints like an expressionist, and uncongenial as I find this way of painting, I can see in Mr. Yeats's work a startling virtuosity. His painting is luminous and succulent, but I do not find it very expressive. The cadenzas have no formal context. Exuberant, voluble, slapdash, Mr. Yeats cannot be accused of burying his talent, but does he not dissipate it rather recklessly? Sir Kenneth Clark in his foreword to the catalogue says, "Colour knows no laws; it is the language of the free, the passionate, the impulsive, the intoxicated." Art, I suggest, demands the disciplining of impulse to law, and I am very doubtful about work produced by the intoxicated—Van Gogh's last works, for instance, in which the cypresses reel and the sun revolves seem to me sad affairs. It may be, however, that Mr. Yeats is not the careless, improvising rhapsodist he appears, but like James Joyce, so absorbed by his medium, that he neglects the content. Whatever the cause, these paintings seem to me as empty as they are brilliant.

Sir William Nicholson's pictures are many of them undated, but it is evident that he has submitted his art to a tireless process of refinement. His painting is a "case" only because in 1911 he somehow managed to make such works as *The Lowestoft Bowl* in the Tate and worse, *Le Déjeuner de Marie*. Sir Kenneth Clark justly compares Sir William's pictures to Max Beerbohm's essays, and indeed both are masterly in so unostentatious a way as to escape the plaudits of the obtuse. How, then, did this eminently tasteful artist produce many shiny works pepped up with high lights and distinguished only by superior skill from the regular Royal Academy objects manufactured by followers of Sargent? His early illustrations suggest the influence of Lautrec, with whom he shares a strong sense of character. This is displayed in the interesting picture of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb, and most happily in the portrait of Professor Saintsbury. Many of his later pictures such as Mrs. Winston Churchill's *Black Swans at Chartwell* and *Trout* and Mr. Vincent Massey's *Glass and Fruit* are of an elegance that must afford permanent delight. Braque himself, though more inventive, is not more delicate. If Sir William chose now to apply this taste and skill to the rendering of character, we should have at last what we so signally lack—a portrait-painter. But swans and seas and trout are sweeter to the eye than that map of vacuity or appetite, the human face, and Sir William, goodness knows, has the right to look at what he likes. His work, it must be admitted, is without the intensity of great art, but consummate style gives him a most honourable place in the history of the English School.

Other good pictures now visible. *The Redfern Gallery*: highly enjoyable exhibition including a wonderful little *fauve* Matisse and lovely Bonnards, a charming Vuillard sketch, a Cézanne water-colour and several Sickerts, one of them a stunner. *Leicester Galleries:* Modigliani, Gauguin, Pascin, Chagall, very fine Rouault, a delicious Still Life by Chastel; some French Sunday painters whose success in Paris may well have led them to paint also on weekdays, Peyronnet, Vivin, Bauchant—agreeable enough, but the more one sees such pictures the more miraculous appears the achievement of the Douanier. Masterly pastel by Sickert, other good English pictures by Matthew Smith, Ivon Hitchens, Graham Sutherland, Winifred Nicholson, Edward le Bas, Alfred Wolmark, Irene Wyatt and William Scott. The last a newcomer, uncommonly promising. *Coolings*: third exhibition of Civil Defence artists. The most important function of this society, I consider, is to encourage the self-taught artist by exhibiting his work. R. J. Buckingham's delightful *Morning on the Canal* and H. H. Weinstock's two vigorous portraits are remarkable instances of the success an unsophisticated eye and hand can achieve. There is also excellent, highly professional work by Lowes. D. Luard, William L. Clause, Denis Mathews and Clifford Root. Other interesting paintings in various styles by W. Kemsby, W. S. Haines, Bernard Moss, Rose L. Henriques, S. E. Dukes, Margaret Bunting, John Greg and Albert V. Bennett. The most interesting sculpture is by C. C. Attenborrow.

RAYMOND MORTIMER.

STALIN MOY GOLUBCHIK

(Overheard at the Carlton Club).

Oh! Stalin is my darling, my darling, my darling,
Stalin is my darling, the old *molodyetz*.*

I much rejoice to have a choice of Russian epithets,
And spread the fame of Stalin's name as a true *molodyetz*.

A real good sport, he holds the fort and laughs at Hitler's threats,
He pulls his weight for Church and State, the old *molodyetz*.

Though they are Red, much may be said for Fighting Soviets—
One Communist I can't resist, the old *molodyetz*.

The *status quo* of long ago I drop without regrets,
Allied we fight for Red and Right with the old *molodyetz*.

We will supply this great Ally forgetting loans or debts,
Give lend and lease (until the peace) to the old *molodyetz*.

Stalin moy golubchik, golubchik, golubchik,
Stalin, moy golubchik, the old *molodyetz*.

SAGITTARIUS

* Molodyetz—Good fellow.

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"Lydia," at the Odeon

Two names are given equal prominence in the list of "attributions": produced by Alexander Korda, directed by Duvivier. Perhaps it is wrong to assign all the faults to the first, and all the felicities to the second; but at any rate *Lydia* is a film in which nodding sentimentality and flashes of exquisite feeling go together. The tea-party of sexagenarians—Lydia and her lovers enjoying a reunion—is as dreadful as elaborate make-up and *ersatz* tenderness can make it. The old lady (Merle Oberon) talks, and we are treated to the episode of each lover in turn. This is where Duvivier steps in with some delicious snow scenes, a ball, an elopement that crashes, an orphanage for blind children, a music hall of the 'eighties, a month of love-making in a seaside cabin, which revive the magic of *Carnet du Bal* and *La Charette Fantôme*. Such moments compensate for the Hollywood framework, the mummified tea-party that keeps reappearing like a boring compère. Miss Oberon, much improved, gives a lively and touching performance except in her guise of old lady.

Correspondence

THE SIKORSKI-STALIN AGREEMENT

SIR,—I am glad Mr. Rothstein does not challenge the main thesis of my letter, as to the interpretation to be placed on the Sikorski-Stalin Declaration. In any case, that interpretation has now been amply confirmed with the Soviet signature of the "Declaration of the United Nations."

However, I think he should have hesitated before suggesting that I was misleading in saying that there has been a shift of emphasis in Soviet propaganda. For he himself mentions that the first clause of the Sikorski-Stalin Declaration speaks of "German Hitlerite Imperialism," but fails to mention that in the same clause is the term "German invaders," in the second clause the term "German spoliators," in the third clause the term "German criminals," and in the last paragraph the term, "German barbarians," all without any qualifying adjective.

I do not favour the quotation of isolated examples to set beside Mr. Rothstein's, even when they can be multiplied. Here is the view of an observer whose name will be well-known to NEW STATESMAN AND NATION readers. In the *Sunday Times* for December 7th Alexander Werth wrote:

"The conduct of the Germans in Russian occupied territories and the hideous crimes they have committed, notably against wounded Russian soldiers, has whipped up in Russia such a wave of hatred against the German soldiers that the slogans, used by Soviet propaganda at the beginning of the war about 'the German people oppressed by the Nazi gangsters' have completely disappeared. They have given way to a standpoint corresponding more exactly to the feelings of the Russian people as a whole."

I do not go by any means so far as Mr. Werth. I simply say that there has been a shift of emphasis. Human indignation at crimes never has time for hair-splitting verbal or theoretical distinctions. And there is no doubt about the indignation of the Soviet peoples.

For propaganda purposes emphasis on "the other Germany" may be of value. But let us face the probability, if not the fact, that "the other Germany" is rather a hope for the future than a reality of the present. Meantime, the quest for it has led to a number of arbitrary and undialectical antitheses. The Nazi Party and the Rest; Young and Old Germans; Prussians and the Others; Richer Classes and Working Class. None of these corresponds with reality as a Socialist understands it. Now Mr. Rothstein is presenting us with a new, equally undialectical antithesis: the German Fascist Army and the German Rear. This from a Marxist-Leninist, who should know better. "Hmph! Hmph!" I think I hear a voice grunting, as so often in life it granted, but now from a tomb. STEPHEN GARRY

265 Salmon Street, N.W.9.

[Reference is made to this correspondence in our leading article this week.—ED., *N.S. & N.*]

RUBBER

SIR,—The rubber magnates in control of the vital rubber estates in Malaya have hitherto been concerned with the financial aspects, completely ignoring (through complacency) the potential dangers from the Japanese that their estates and Britain's vital sources of rubber might be cut off.

With their usual ignorance, both technical and economic, and short-sightedness, they have held a tight grip on the price of raw rubber, maintaining financial control rigidly at their own will. Furthermore, by their unconcern of waste rubber the price of this commodity was depressed from 20*s.* to 10*s.* per ton (average), which compelled rubber manufacturers to burn accumulated waste. No encouragement was given, either by the Government or the rubber magnates, to accumulate waste rubber in an organised manner, "just in case."

I have had fifteen years' experience in the rubber industry, principally on the technical side, and have had occasion to dispose of waste rubber to dealers, who are in the main an unreliable lot, and even at the best of times have never received more than £5 per ton for 99 per cent. pure rubber waste, and as little as 10*s.* per ton for coarser grades. To reduce working costs in the factory this was discouraging.

In my opinion there is something like one million tons of waste rubber lying around Great Britain, which, if collected scientifically, would provide a useful contribution to our war supplies and offset shortages from Malaya.

Many times I have employed rubber reclaimed from waste and have obtained excellent physical results, on par with pure rubber compounds.

The principal sources of waste rubber are old tyres, inner tubes, hot-water bottles, mechanical goods, etc.

That magic word "Synthetic Rubber" might be looked upon by the layman as the solution to our potential shortage. Having worked with synthetic rubber during the last few years, I can assure you that less than 1 per cent. of synthetic rubber used here is made in Great Britain; the balance is imported.

It is interesting to note that we hear frequently from Government spokesmen that we have blockaded the Axis powers from their supplies of raw rubber. The Axis powers make sufficient synthetic rubber for their own needs. So, you see, we are now blockaded and the situation is reversed.

I suggest that a *scientific* official Government committee should be set up to control and commandeer all stocks of waste rubber throughout Great Britain, and arrange to reclaim this waste in an orderly manner.

G. L. BARRON,
Associate of the Institution of The Rubber Industries.

CONSCRIPTION OF WEALTH

POINTS FROM LETTERS

What we have in mind is something on the lines of Sir Richard Acland's proposal, namely, that the State should, as a war measure, take over all privately owned capital and guarantee to the owners for their lifetime reasonable interest on their holdings according to a sliding scale. Sir Richard suggested, I believe, that owners of capital bringing in up to £100 a year should retain the whole of their interest, but that millionaires should receive only one-tenth, *i.e.*, £3,000 a year instead of £30,000. The reason we advocate the conscription of wealth is that we wish our nation to become a community, but realise that the existing ownership of capital makes anything in the nature of real community impossible. Sir Richard's proposals are welcomed by an increasing number of smaller capitalists, especially those with strong Christian or humanitarian convictions.

R. ST. JOHN READE

I am afraid that Mr. Reade is one of a numerous band of Left-wingers who still live in a dream-world of their own. Will he kindly mention a single "magnate" in charge of a Supply Control who is not sacrificing his own or his shareholders' interests? I know a good many, and they have all made financial sacrifices on assuming their wartime offices.

Apart from operators on the Black Market, all concerned with industry are poorer. No one is making extra money out of the war; most people are making far less. Indeed, the only honest men who are financially benefiting are agricultural labourers, craftsmen and a restricted number of workmen. This is all to the good, apart from the fact that some are making an unduly greater income than their fellows in the Army.

If Mr. Reade would make even a cursory study of the effects of E.P.T. and Surtax he would realise that he must pursue a long trail before he discovers any "magnates" who are going to come out of this war one penny the richer than the day on which they entered it.

G. E. HOWARD

Mr. L. J. Cadbury's letter ignores the vast sense of outrage amongst the mass of our fellow men that whilst they are being deprived of their lives and their years and their small proprietary businesses, the vast power of the Government's administrative personnel and equipment is being absorbed to keep gigantic vested interests—railways, mines, engineering, chemical industries and foodstuffs mills—not merely in working order for the post-war period, but presently and prospectively lucrative. This has a double-edged effect: (*a*) Wealth, as represented by these interests, and covered, as it is, by the cleverly devised schemes of compensation and insurance, is not suffering any irreplaceable destruction of itself; (*b*) the gulf between the exploiting few who hold these interests and the non-possessing mass of workers is rapidly widening beyond the capacity of any after-war statesmanship to bridge it.

The few in Parliament who demand the conscription of industry see what is happening, but what hope have they in the face of an overwhelming Tory Government majority which, behind a genuine title to unity against the enemy without, is using every conceivable pretence and stratagem to entrench more firmly the enemy within—the private interests of exploitation and usury which are the veritable breeders of war, and which—*if* they survive—will most certainly make a true peace between the warring peoples as impossible as they did at Versailles.

S. L. BROOKES

(1) If you conscript the men of a working-class family you conscript its wealth at the source.

(2) In sheer numbers more working-class men fall than owner-class; there are more of them, ten times more.

(3) The assertion that "all those who survive (!) the war will be free from conscription at the end of it" merely provokes a question: "For how long?" This war has caught up in one lifetime on the men who were conscripted in the last.

(4) The differentiation between reserved and unreserved occupations distributes the casualty risks unevenly as between persons, but gives an added security to industry, inasmuch as it reserves the labour to carry on and make profits. That the nation needs its products does not affect the point; in fact, it enhances and confirms this security.

(5) Mr. Cadbury says he is "fully in favour of survival of industry with power to achieve a progressively increasing . . . standard of living, etc., etc. So am I. We differ only as to who is to hold this "power to achieve."

N. K. WELLS

SCIENCE AND POLITICS

SIR,—Dr. Darlington, in his letter on "Science and Politics," scarcely does justice to Sir Henry Dale's argument. Sir Henry's sane and authoritative address dealt with the freedom and organisation of science and with its relation to government. He did not say, without qualification, that science should be kept free from a connection with controversial politics. His words were, "If science should become entangled in controversial politics, through the over-eagerness of its advocates or champions to invoke the sanction

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of science, or to claim its potentialities, in support of any special political doctrine, then indeed I believe that the threat to its freedom might become a real danger."

This gives no support to Dr. Darlington's apparent assumption that Sir Henry Dale advocates a supine attitude on the part of the scientist to his work in its relation to human affairs. There is nothing here, or in any other part of the address, to discourage the scientist from using vigorous methods to ensure the adoption of a discovery bearing on the welfare of his fellows. There is nothing, even, to discourage use being made of a political party for that purpose, though such a method would seem to many to be of dubious value. For it is, in fact, the disinterested and non-party statement that carries most weight.

Dr. Darlington is unfortunate in the example he has chosen, for it illustrates this point. In nutrition great advances have been made on the scientific side in the last generation. The practical applications have been pressed home by disinterested men with no party bias. As a result the public has been more usefully instructed here than in any other branch of science; and scientific results have been used to an important extent in framing national policy.

The day before I saw Dr. Darlington's letter I had read his latest contribution to scientific research. It belongs to what is called "pure" science, a region in which he is a distinguished worker. Would he not agree with Sir Henry Dale that, here, science should be free from "extraneous influence," that is from influence which is not scientific in nature?

University of Bristol. M. SKENE

FREEDOM OF THE STREET

SIR,—In her recent letter last week Miss Stamp suggests that the Communist Party stewards at the Stoll Theatre meeting on December 28th violently deprived her of copies of the *New Leader* which she was selling.

I have made enquiries of the Chief Steward, who assures me that no such action was taken by any official steward.

In recent weeks workers have become particularly incensed by sellers of the Trotskyist "Socialist Appeal" outside meetings. This is quite easily understood when it contains foul slanders of Stalin and the Red Army leaders.

If Fascists were openly selling literature they could sell nothing more abusive. It is regrettable that some *New Leader* sellers fraternise with these unworthy elements, and that some I.L.P. expressions are indistinguishable from those of the Trotskyists.

TED BRAMLEY
London District Committee Communist Party.

SIR,—You ask "Why should our correspondent have imagined that the C.P. believed in the freedom of the Press?" The implication being that there is freedom of the press except under C.P.

You do not have to be a Communist to know there is no freedom where one group has the money power to put its own twist on all news. Look at all the slander and lies told about Soviet Russia for the last 24 years. Your own paper has not been over-eager to tell the whole truth of their marvellous successes. The sneers on two occasions at their tube showed either ignorance or deliberate falsehood.

I used to wonder at Lenin putting the ironic inverted commas whenever he mentioned the "Socialists." Was it not Stalin who once said they were the last prop of the capitalist system? He appears to be right once again. Truth will, like murder, come out in the end, in spite of a "free" press. H. S. HOOPER

[Our correspondent rises to a bait that was not even intended for him. We made no assertion that the press was completely "free" under capitalism; it is "free" in this country in the sense that it still gives an opportunity for the expression of a considerable variety of view. We merely wished to remind our correspondent that the freedom of the press is part of Liberal and not of Communist theory.—ED. *N. S. & N.*]

ABYSSINIA BROADCAST

SIR,—Professor H. J. Laski, writing in "A London Diary" of a meeting with "the British officer who led the Patriots' campaign in Abyssinia," asks why his "tale of epic quality . . . should be reserved for a few dinner tables," and "what is the B.B.C. doing?"

May I point out that Brigadier D. A. Sandford has broadcast the story of his mission four times, to North America on November 28th, in the Pacific and African Services on November 29th, and in the Home Service on December 14th.

KENNETH ADAM,
Director of Publicity, B.B.C.

THE FACTS OF LIFE

SIR,—Couldn't someone be found to explain what used to be called "The Facts of Life" to our Members of Parliament? Or is a neo-Victorian prudery responsible for the omission in recent debates of any reference to the factor of child-bearing as it affects the conscription of women? We are told that no married women are to be compelled to join the Army, but no one explained why—that it was because, between 20 and 30, a large proportion of them were likely to be busy bearing children, and that childless married women shared the exemption because their childlessness might be short-lived.

In industry, arrangements can be made—as in the U.S.S.R.—by the granting of leave during the latter stages of pregnancy, and by factory crèches. An army with any large proportion of pregnant and nursing mothers might be a little more difficult to arrange.

But what of the over 45's? Miss Rathbone, in a recent broadcast, put in a word for us, but apart from that we seem to be relegated to the home, with the prospect of an occasional non-vital job, to release a younger woman. M.P.s, one surmises, have heard of (but would not mention) the "change of life" and are under the impression that a woman is entirely incapacitated thereafter.

In fact, of course, many of us are able-bodied, healthy, and far more "mobile" than we could have been 20 years earlier. No-one need provide crèches because of our entry into industry. It may be true that the adolescent's need of parents is great, but it is not an all-day need, as with younger children. In very many cases it is only a holiday-time need. I wonder if it has occurred to any factory manager yet, that mothers of children at boarding-schools could be useful in term-time? A new version of part-time work?

As for the Army, we are at least as fit for it as are our husbands, and much less likely to cause, and suffer, emotional entanglements in it than our daughters.

MIDDLE-AGED, BUT NOT DECREPIT, HOUSEWIFE

RATION SWAPPING

SIR,—According to a press report three women were summoned at Croydon for buying the butter rations of a woman friend at a mothers' meeting. They pleaded ignorance and said they thought they were helping a poor mother. May I professionally assure these victims of official misguidedness that, provided the children's share is not involved, there are sound economic reasons why they should trade rations in this way, that no moral stigma attaches to their action and that they could with a clear conscience continue exchanging behind drawn curtains. They should also note for future action that this is the sort of damned nonsense we should get under a planned economy.

I beg to inform the Ministry of Food that I am swapping some of my margarine ration for some of my wife's sugar ration, that I would do further swapping with people down the road if I had occasion to, and that they can go and chase themselves. But for the paper shortage I should request you, sir, to do a public service by running a column of exchange and mart in adult coupons. G. L. SCHWARTZ

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

I HAVE read *War and Peace* in war and in peace. It is not one of those books that alter a great deal, that belong to one period of our lives rather than to another; and after ten years everything about it seems much the same—delightful families, strangers encountering, falling in love and growing old, drawing-rooms and landscapes divided by a thousand miles, parties, rumours, multitudes, human habit and renewal, talk of war, war itself on the Dnieper and in the Kremlin. Napoleon and Alexander meet again at Tilsit. Natasha's skirt for her first ball is still three inches too long. The she-wolf comes out of a gap in the wood. Pierre drives to Borodino in the early morning and stands next the artillery wearing his white hat. Two young strangers exchange glances of love across an opera-house. The foreign generals crowd in a tent round Kutuzov, whose single eye closes during their deliberations. Prince Andrew lies under the Rostov's roof in his death-trance. Moscow burns. The French retreat. An unhappy old man dies. There is a family reunion in the country, with parcels, children, cigar-smoke, and little Nicholas gets his fingers rapped for listening too eagerly to Uncle Pierre.

These and many other scenes are the same, exactly as one had remembered. We return to them, so much older in ourselves, it may be, so much more jogged by events, but the serenity of *War and Peace* accommodates us, however changed, and remains itself remarkably unaffected. Even war, the place names, the circumstances of Napoleon's advance and defeat, which might be expected to jump anachronistically into the present, manage to keep their place, because the world of Tolstoy's novel is so much more complete than any view we obtain of events to-day, and because Tolstoy provides so many other roads of reality connecting us with his world. From pecking for scraps in the newspapers we turn to *War and Peace*, and we sink our times in the past, not only to escape but to make soundings, just as half-unconsciously everyone identifies himself with a character in a story he is reading. The cycle in which Europe finds itself halfway at the moment is accomplished before our eyes. Our fears and bafflement acquire distance and order: he satisfaction, though not, I think, the essential pleasure, of reading *War and Peace* is enhanced in wartime.

But, as I have said, for those who come back to it, Tolstoy's book will have changed little. It is a mountain range that does not grow or diminish with revisiting.

It creates an epoch (how easily it seems!) and it does this by combining, as does no other book, two realities: the reality of fiction and the reality of history. That the two do *not* mix easily, at any rate in comparatively equal quantities, can be seen from the absence of similar works in literature with which to compare Tolstoy's. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*? It portrays an epoch—a civilisation—but the individual voices, the sentiments, the humanity are lacking. Balzac's *La Comédie Humaine*? A profusion, but no pattern emerges from its vivid exploration of society. Saint-Simon's memoirs? Hardly. One glances along the shelf of historical novels, which achieve only a romantic conviction, if any, and of political novels, as dead as their politics, until the eye rests on Flaubert's *Education Sentimentale*. Yes, there a similar fusion has taken place, though on so small a scale and with so different a centre that comparison with Tolstoy, except for the sake of contrasting two widely opposed methods, is out of the question. One writer, however—a humble one—does pull me up unexpectedly by a resemblance. To anyone who wanted to know the flavour of *War and Peace* before reading it, that flavour of memoirs and of the novel, of lives unfolding and events relentlessly striking, of sympathetic realism, of an imagination that lights up its subject unremarkably like daylight, I should say, "Trollope—Trollope multiplied in intensity by a thousand!"

The energy of Tolstoy's intuition, capable of bringing alive in a few sentences an old horse in a field or of giving us the love story of Anna Karenina, has blinded us to a curious fact about Tolstoy: of all great writers he is the least fanciful, the most literal-minded. Clear-sightedness and uncanny sympathy, in his case, take the place of vision. His prodigious creation is entirely a prose creation, without any undertones or overtones, and I think Tolstoy is supreme among novelists partly because there is no poetry, no understanding even of poetry, to detract from the clearness of his gaze. He is opposed to poetry as such. He praised Homer, but considered the Greek dramatists "rude savages," found Baudelaire unintelligible, criticised Shakespeare as "not great" and not even "an average good poet," loathed the later Beethoven, was appalled by the Impressionists.

This Philistinism, more and more loudly asserted in old age, was more than the expression of evangelical and puritan views about art; he had always despised the imagination as a whore. What his novels lack is style, what they have is life, on a scale and with a naturalness matched by no other writer; or, if you prefer, the people, the landscapes, the incidents in his narrative *are* its style. Other "big" novelists—Balzac, say, or Dickens—achieve a reality of their own, so that a new race of people seem to have sprung up round us from their writings. "There goes a Balzac character," we say of someone passing, but never, "He or she might have come out of Tolstoy." The Tolstoy characters walking abroad are those we take for granted, the norm, people in general, and for that reason we pay little attention to them except in the pages of Tolstoy, where they suddenly seem true to life as do few other personages in fiction. By comparison Balzac runs a home for monsters, and Dickens cracks his whips over a circus. Both of these novelists are poets, their characters are like Shakespeare's characters, and rarely in their books will you find an ordinary person of life size; there is in them, too, a heap of *bad* poetry—sentimental reverie, bastard moods of the tragic or comic-pathetic, passages of a tattered poesy that attract by their very unlikeness to the colours in nature. "*Enivrez-vous!*" cried Baudelaire to humanity; get drunk with poetry, with wine, with egoism, with the stench of the herd, with love or power—no matter how. Disintoxicate yourselves, is Tolstoy's message, and from the first sentences of his great novels the process of disintoxication begins. He might have said of his writings what Sibelius is reported to have said of his music, "I give you pure water."

All, then, in *War and Peace* is seen in the prose, the daylight of the imagination: a period, an empire, landscapes, history and the individual, war and peace. The aim is truth, truth that shall have a beauty and infection of its own; events shall be as far as possible as they happened, people shall be lifesize. Tolstoy largely succeeds in this aim; his story unrolls with wonderful breadth. Very rarely are we conscious of a discrepancy from the hand "weighing considerate scales"; it is not, in fact, till the reader has gone a third of the way through the book that he begins to recognise the flaw in Tolstoy. Napoleon arrives on the scene, and he seems at first (what a shock of pleasure this brings!) to be life-size like the others. Napoleon reappears: is it possible that Tolstoy has made him a shade smaller than the rest? Not only possible but inescapable; the figure riding the crest of events is the smallest in the picture. One has the impression of a man in the clutch of circumstance who is less alive and less free than the meanest soldier in his army; it is not *he* who has conquered Europe, who wins Borodino and wins and loses Moscow, not he, but a coincidence of forces pressing ceaselessly from every direction. The door is opened to argument, and Tolstoy himself argues at length about history and determinism and free-will; two or three pages at a time whenever Napoleon is there, a chapter or so to show that a battle has nothing to do with the general who wins it, and at the end of the story Tolstoy goes on talking himself for fifty of the dullest and most repetitive pages that have ever formed the conclusion of a novel. Much of what he says may be true; that's hardly the point. He fails as a novelist when he has to let go his creation in order to argue and expound; and this reminds us—since Tolstoy is Tolstoy—how many occasions for platform addresses have been missed. Suppose the other ideas in *War and Peace* had received similar treatment? Fortunately they are left unargued. That war is a disease, an abomination—this is perfectly expressed, without any distortion and in scenes of grandeur, by the novel as a whole. Then the people in the foreground argue about life, love, politics, and that is admirably done, too. And in the religious emotions of his characters—Princess Mary's selfless submission, Pierre's woolly wanderings into Masonry, Prince Andrew's acceptance of death—Tolstoy's own feeling is presented and transmuted. Only Napoleon and the historians, destiny and human choice, remain intractable. Tolstoy's imagination stops short. It is here perhaps that the prose nature of his creation becomes most evident; he can't make the poetic jump which alone would bridge this chasm. When it comes to high argument I prefer Milton speaking as God in *Paradise Lost* to Tolstoy speaking as Tolstoy. I have the impression, too, that Tolstoy was both jealous of Napoleon and quite incapable of understanding greatness in others.

Having finished *War and Peace*, and continuing the flight over Napoleonic Europe, I read a book known to me hitherto only in fragments—*The Dynasts*. Curiously enough, Hardy succeeds at the very points where Tolstoy is weakest: in his portrayal of Napoleon, which, though not striking, is human and many-sided, and in the supernatural structure of pities, shades and angels peering down and commenting on sublunary affairs. True, their voices are often flat, like those of wiseacres in an inn overlooking a village street, but the framework holds and the dramatic convention, with clouds parting underneath to reveal a new battlefield or another gaily lit ballroom, produces some startling and imposing effects. Writing in the early days of the film and before the aeroplane, Hardy races ahead in imagination of both. Where Tolstoy moving over his landscapes is of the earth earthy, Hardy soars from Spain to the Urals, from the Nile to Trafalgar, hovering now in the stratosphere to brood over the map of the weather spread below, now diving dizzily to an open window in Brussels where two women ask news of the French advance. Most of these aerial sensations are provided by the elaborate "stage directions" written in prose, and they, rather than the vigorous and crabbed verse of Hardy's dialogue, set the immensity of the drama. Here, for example, is the "stage direction" of the retreat from Moscow; the army winds slowly into view.

> What has floated down from the sky upon the Army is a flake of snow. Then comes another and another, till natural features, hitherto varied with the tints of autumn, are confounded, and all is phantasmal grey and white.
>
> The caterpillar shape still creeps laboriously nearer, but instead of increasing in size by the rules of perspective, it gets more attenuated, and there are left upon the ground behind it minute parts of itself, which are speedily flaked over, and remain as white pimples by the wayside.

Such passages show at work an imagination more swift and poetic than Tolstoy's; yet with all its varied and dramatic scenes (Trafalgar and Austerlitz are brilliantly achieved), *The Dynasts* is a lesser achievement than *War and Peace*. Not, for all its aerial gloom and exhilaration, that Hardy's drama loses touch with humanity; it doesn't, and pity is one of his noblest qualities. But reality is fixed in the procession of events and historical figures, and we see only in fragments the ordinary lives moving to a tempo of their own. The best tribute one can pay to *The Dynasts* is to say that, even if one has been reading *War and Peace*, it strikes one as a great book.

G. W. STONIER

TELLING THE TALE

The Modern Short Story. By H. E. BATES. *Nelson.* 7s. 6d.

The common prejudice against short stories in England—a prejudice which has never existed in Russia, France or America, where the best short stories are written, has left the accusation that it is a minority cult with a High Church appeal to the eye. Mr. H. E. Bates, who is very eminent in its practice, refutes this and writes the brief history of the art, analyses the chief influences which have formed it and defends it as a new form of writing with an original achievement and future. This was worth doing, for the short story as we have known it in the last 30 years or more *is* a new form of writing: short stories are not novels compressed to the dimension of an emergency ration. They are the result of a marriage between the reporter and the poet. They have broken into the field of fiction very much as free verse broke into poetry in the 'eighties. But to say that these stories are something new in literature does not, I am afraid, mean as Mr. Bates hopes, that they are going even in a minor degree to be as important as the invention of the drama in the sixteenth century or the novel in the eighteenth. I also have that hope and can see many arguments for it. The short story writer, like the makers of films, can cover the ground more quickly and with a more exciting and summary variety than the novelist. But it is as well to remember that dissenting cults have a way of dwindling and returning eventually to the main body. The cinema may absorb the short story. The short story may prove to have been simply nature's way of purging the novel of its verbiage, its repetitions, and its plodding devotion to the frontal attack on its subjects. This purging has been, indeed, already the effect of Hemingway's stories on the modern novel, though not, oddly enough, on the latest work of Hemingway himself.

The history of the short story in Europe and America is recent. It begins when both Gogol and Poe, writing almost at the same time, struck out from the folk tale and the novel. The aim appears even then to have been to make a genre which would have the tension of poetry, the insinuation of unofficial news. The break can perhaps be seen more easily in Balzac, where pieces like *Honorine*, *Le Curé de Tours*, *Le Chef d'Oeuvre Inconnu* or *Une Passion dans le Désert* are not the novelist's left-overs or discarded chapters like *La Maison du Chat qui Pelote*. The hankering had existed in a maddening way in the seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century novelists: there are Fielding's *Man on the Hill* wedged tediously into *Tom Jones*, the dilatory romances which stop the action of *Don Quixote* or the human documents through which the reader makes his weary detour in *Gil Blas*. The novelist was always aware of the value of these unofficial stories, with their heightened or at any rate private and different rhythm.

The strange thing, as Mr. Bates points out, is that while France, Russia and America produced masters in this new form, next to nothing of importance was written in English until Kipling. What is the explanation? The national suspicion of wit and intellect? Mr. Bates's suggestions are that the story cannot bear the weight of words and moral injunction which English writers liked to carry in the nineteenth century, that class barriers held the novel like a mould and gave it an official prestige. New literary forms arise as society itself changes; and English society did not change. The emancipated middle class of the eighteenth century merely got richer in the nineteenth. In Mr. Bates's mind—and I think he is right—there is some connection between freedom of movement in society which class barriers restrict, the reporter's irreverent pass into privacy, and the development of short story writing. In England the man with an anecdote to tell, the curious experience or emotion or man to describe had to give it the pomp of conventional literary ceremony; in Russia and America the thing could be thrown out as a piece of life without social apology, for the class areas were simpler and wider. Life had no position to keep up; and for a new literary form, that is not only propitious but indispensable, as one may see from the birth of the novel itself. Bret Harte—in an interesting passage quoted by Mr. Bates—seems to support this theory. Bret Harte believed that the American short story was born out of the folk humour—not exactly rich in a middle class culture—upon which people fall back when they are lost in exceptional circumstances, when society is in chaos as American society was in his time. To humour he might have added folk horror which gets a free rein from public credulity when standards have gone and new ones have yet to be made. The link of Poe's stories with the enormous craze for spiritualism in the United States is well-known.

But these theories are so speculative that one looks around for more concrete reasons for the time lag in the production of distinguished short stories in England. The place to turn to is, of course, periodical literature. Here there is a suggestion. It looks to me as though the English essay is responsible for suffocating the child. From Steele to Lamb, from the sketches of Thackeray to the light articles of the 'nineties there was plenty of short impromptu writing, but people and living were incidental to reflection. The admired aim was not the sort of tension a story would have had, but a relaxation and dispersal of tension. The ideal of the English reporter—see old files of the *Times*—was to write like a don in his cups; and if one is bent on finding the real English short stories of the period, one must look in the verses of the music-hall—"At Trinity Church I met me doom; Now we live in a top back room"—in the dramatic poems of Browning and the rhymed *faits divers* of Thomas Hardy.

Mr. Bates goes over the work of Maupassant and Chehov, Kipling, Mansfield, Lawrence, Sherwood Anderson and Hemingway with the acute eye of a practitioner, and discusses their contribution. To his own generation he is very kind. We all raise our hats politely. The virtue and vice of our contribution is that it began, at any rate, as a substitute for poetry, and this rather than the inability to write as well as Chehov has been its disadvantage. The book will be pleasant for the general reader, useful to schools, particularly in its discussion of methods, and is brightly and shrewdly written; as a piece of criticism it is appreciative rather than penetrating. More than the novel, the short story has depended on outstanding personalities who can give the quickly discoverable tricks a hard-headed assurance, like Maupassant's, or a startling force like D. H. Lawrence's. The war and dislocation of society certainly provide the episodic material which is the form's special food, but unless writers develop moral gravity it will cease to be more than a decorative contribution to imaginative literature. The lack of comic writing is due to this failure. An example of what is meant by this gravity can be taken from Joyce's *The Dead*, which appears to have impressed most critics chiefly because of its beautiful and often quoted last paragraph. This story really stands firm because Joyce had invested the comedy of the Christmas party which is described with a subtle and dual sense of time. The people stand with one foot in history and with the other in eternity. The "beautiful school" of poetic Chehovian short story writers have always tended to plump for the snow and eternity at the end of *The Dead* because these are aesthetically effective; but without the solid sense of historical situation in the heart of the story this effect would have the mere prettiness of a half-truth.

V. S. PRITCHETT

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THINKERS OF THE CIVIL WAR

The Works of Gerrard Winstanley. Edited by G. H. SABINE. *Oxford Press.* 30s.

Milton in the Puritan Revolution. By DON M. WOLFE. *Nelson.* $4.

A History of Modern Liberty. By JAMES MACKINNON, Ph.D., D.D., D.Th., LL.D. Vol. IV. THE STRUGGLE WITH THE STUARTS. *Longmans Green.* 16s.

The debt which students of the Civil War and the Commonwealth owe to American scholarship steadily grows. Cornell University has now given us the only modern edition of Winstanley's works. Only the British Museum had them all, though a few were scattered in other libraries. Professor Sabine has summarised his three earliest theological tracts: otherwise everything of his is reproduced in full, together with a few documents from other pens which illustrate the Digger movement. His introduction, as sympathetic as it is scholarly, gathers the few external facts that are known about the author and analyses the development of his ideas. Mr. Berens had quoted or summarised all the outstanding passages in *The Digger Movement*, and Mr. Petegorsky had studied the social background very ably in his *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War*. But here at last we have the man himself—and all of him. He was a propagandist who constantly repeated a few simple ideas in popular language, but when one has made one's own selection from this ample material (686 pages) Winstanley stands out as one of the most original and daring thinkers in an age of pioneers. He owed much to the Anabaptist tradition. Neither Professor Sabine nor Mr. Petegorsky has noticed how much he drew from More's *Utopia*. Some of his ideas he held in common with the Levellers, more particularly their left-wing rural group which flourished in the Chilterns. But when this is said, the two things which give him a place in the history of English thought were entirely his own. In that age of passionate and intolerant faith he first reached a position which Professor Sabine bluntly calls "secularist." The word is hardly too strong. He began as the Anabaptists did, by proclaiming a doctrine of the Inner Light, which emancipated him from the bibliolatry of his age. He went on to identify God with Reason and reached a pantheist position. He then swept away Heaven and Hell, with all the terrors that Puritan theology used to discipline the masses in the interests of property. Finally, he proposed a church without ritual, in which elected ministers should lecture on Sundays upon natural history and the human struggle for freedom. His other distinction is that he defined, more sharply than any of his groping Communist predecessors, the meaning of exploitation, when a land-owing class confronts a proletariat that must sell its labour to those who own the means of life. His remedy was Thomas More's—"community" as he called it—but he brought Utopia down to English earth when he and his fifty landless rebels dug up and manured the common on St. George's Hill, near Cobham. The Digger movement left hardly a trace behind it in the traditions of the English working class, but Winstanley deserved a place among the noblest and bravest of its pioneers.

Another American scholar, Mr. Don M. Wolfe, has given us a very able and most readable study of Milton's political and theological development, set in the context of his time. The book is much wider in scope than its title indicates. Milton is treated as one of a phalanx of pioneers who were hotly debating, in the intervals of prison, the pillory and the battles of the Civil War, all the fundamentals of liberty and democracy—Lilburne, Walwyn, Winstanley, Harrington and many more. Milton stands head and shoulders above them all by reason of his literary genius, but by that alone. Lord Brooke, William Walwyn, Williams and most of the Levellers, were in advance of him in their understanding of religious toleration. In social questions he felt no interest whatever

and would have stereotyped the rule of a propertied oligarchy. His real distinction lay in this, as Mr. Wolfe rightly insists, that he first in *Areopagitica* stated the claims of intellectual liberty and integrity. Oddly enough Mr. Wolfe hardly mentions the tracts on divorce. Surely the first of them ranks not merely as one of the most moving and eloquent pieces of prose in our language, but also as one of the bravest things even a pioneer penned—so brave, indeed, that even to-day scholars apologise for it or pass it over in silence. To write it now would be bold: to write it under a Puritan censorship demanded moral, no less than intellectual, audacity.

After an interval of many years, Professor Mackinnon has resumed his history of liberty with a volume that covers the period 1647–1689 in this island. His outlook is somewhat narrowly political and he all but ignores the economic background and the daily life of the masses. The book opens and closes abruptly and the scale of the narrative changes in a very puzzling way, so that while the battle of Dunbar is dismissed in a few lines, that of Bothwell Bridge is described in detail. The style is sober and undramatic. The justification for the book is that it deals more fully with the Scottish side of the struggle against the Stuarts than English histories commonly do. Even here we would gladly have had more. The author hardly helps us to understand what there was in the structure of Scottish society that made Genevan Calvinism so much more congenial than it ever was for long to Englishmen. Again, while he discusses Hobbes, Harrington and Locke at length, he ignores that brilliant if capricious Scottish thinker, Fletcher of Saltoun. Professor Mackinnon is out of sympathy with "fanatics" and "visionaries" and misses much of the daring significance of the Leveller movement. Neither Winstanley nor Walwyn figures in his index. On the other hand, he writes about Covenanters and Cameronians with warm comprehension. They were brave, even heroic men: but was it liberty they fought for?

H. N. BRAILSFORD

DEMOCRACY

Democracy: The Threatened Foundations. By REGINALD LENNARD. *Cambridge University Press.* 3s. 6d.

It is a little difficult to know just what Mr. Lennard had in view when he wrote this book. When he discusses the weakness of totalitarian systems, he says, with both pungency and grace, all that one would expect an English Liberal to say. But his discussion of democracy is disappointing. There seems to be an unwillingness on his part to face the grave realities which we have learned to recognise in the last twenty years. It is no doubt true that economic and social conditions have greatly improved; education is better, the life-span is longer, conditions in the factories are far in advance of anything that even trade union leaders would have demanded even forty years ago.

But the real issues Mr. Lennard hardly touches. Is there a permanent compatibility between the system of legal relations we call capitalism and the system of political relations we call democracy? When the technological foundations of the one mean monopoly, which, in its turn, means restriction and the kind of mass-unemployment we have known in the inter-war years, is there not a danger that the principle of capitalism will contradict the principle of democracy? Mr. Lennard does not deal with the long years in which the ruling economic forces of Britain were sympathetic to Mussolini and Hitler. He does not draw any inferences from their long acquiescence in the slums of empire. He emphasises the fact that a number of Left-wing intellectuals have come from ancient educational foundations; but he does not point out how small is their number to the total output of those foundations. At the back of his mind there seems to be a mystic faith in the unbreakable power of our democratic tradition. But he does not give any rational ground upon which that faith is held.

A detached observer could, I think, legitimately claim that most of the improvements to which Mr. Lennard attaches such importance are either the natural concessions made by privilege in an expanding economy or the price it has been prepared to pay for social peace. He would be tempted to observe that not even total war has persuaded privilege to surrender the possession of a single vital principle of its authority since war began; after all, if the war were to end to-morrow, the power of those who have so far dominated our society would be at least as great as when it began, and it could, I think, be fairly argued that the measures taken by the Government have reinforced rather than diminished it. What Professor Tawney has called "our religion of inequality" remains a permanent feature of the landscape. Privilege shares its opportunities where it must; it does not abdicate from their possession. It is difficult to read a book like Mr. Lennard's in the light, say, of Mr. Seebohm Rowntree's latest investigation of poverty in York without the conviction that he dwells a little too complacently on the gains of the last generation, and avoids too easily the need to take the measure of the problems we still confront. No one will doubt that, with all its defects, British democracy offers to the citizen a fuller and richer life than anything made available by totalitarian systems.

But that is not the real issue Mr. Lennard has to face. What we want to know is whether, in the light of the last twenty-five years, we have the right to assume that the will of democracy may hope to prevail when it seeks to touch the central foundations of economic power. That question Mr. Lennard leaves unanswered. Instead, he writes with eloquence and feeling about what has been done in the period when those central foundations were untouched. He still leaves the vital issue at the point where it was left in 1906, when men felt that ordered progress in freedom was part of the ultimate nature of things. But the history of the last generation has, for most of us, shattered the easy confidence to which Mr. Lennard clings.

HAROLD J. LASKI

LIFE ON THE FARM

Life on the Land. By FRED KITCHEN. *Dent.* 12s. 6d.

Glory Hill Farm. By CLIFTON REYNOLDS. *Lane.* 7s. 6d.

Back to the Country. By F. D. SMITH and BARBARA WILCOX. *Black.* 6s.

Farming, as a literary target, has three centres: its elemental context, its techniques and its implicit poetry. In other words it involves things like carting muck or pulling and topping beet, as well as mastering theories of cropping; in addition to the perception that a plough-team at work is a very satisfying spectacle. A poetry disengaged from the context and technique of its subject is a false poetry, and agriculture has suffered enough from that sort of Tin Pan Alley sentiment.

For that reason I want to sing the praises of Fred Kitchen. Mr. Kitchen is apparently a farm labourer. He has published one previous book, *Brother to the Ox*, which was highly praised. His new *Life on the Land* deserves to increase his popularity, for it has the rare quality of chronicling a way of life entirely from the inside. When men consciously become "writers" they

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in some degree detach themselves from their closed vocational standpoint and assume a broader perspective. Much is gained thereby, but the most intimate detail loses some of its warmth. Mr. Kitchen has not yet scraped the muck and dirt off his boots, and the result is something nearer to the land than almost any writing since Tusser. Nearness of this kind is not the whole sum of virtue, but it is a considerable and rare part.

Life on the Land is a series of rural sketches covering the course of a year and loosely linked by the incidental stories of the farm-people. The elements of fiction are the weakest part of the book, and a half-hearted attempt at satire has Mr. Kitchen far out of his depth; but the success or failure of his characterisations is a small matter. The role of his men and women is nearly anonymous. They enrich the book with the slow drone of evening gossip, with occasional shouts and comments in the fields, with the movement and gesture of their occupations. Their personality is subordinate to the general scene; it is indeed the farm-horses, more than the people, which dominate the book.

Mr. Kitchen's style is direct, plain, concise. He thinks first of all of the work of farming. He knows the ways of horses, the coldness of turnip-tops in frost. He sets these things down, without fuss, letting his landscape come naturally without stopping to gape and gibber at it. Just as the rhythm of the season shows through the rhythm of work, so the poetry of a moment shines through the concrete and almost matter-of-fact description of some routine task. I could detect only one inaccuracy—a reference to the "heavy croon" of wood-pigeons sitting on their eggs. I believe all birds regard incubation as a strictly private and confidential affair, to be done in silence. This apart, Mr. Kitchen is a faithful and vivid recorder of each minute particular in the farm-labourer's world.

Mr. Reynolds, a successful business-man who, without farming experience bought and worked a farm, is a most entertaining contrast. The elemental context of agriculture, which Mr. Kitchen personifies, is foreign country to Mr. Reynolds. In *Glory Hill Farm*, Mr. Reynolds is for the most part concerned with the technique of farming, with labour difficulties and problems of economics and policy. The difference between the two books is fascinating. Mr. Kitchen's farming is precedental, continuous, without speculation: Mr. Reynolds's is improvised with mental agility, reinforced by theory and menaced by the unexpected. The tone and tempo of *Life on the Land* are more satisfying than the impatient, aggressive, abstract "efficiency" of *Glory Hill Farm*; nevertheless Mr. Reynolds has virtues which the countryman often lacks—flexibility of mind, a taste for experiment, organising ability. As a personal adventure, *Glory Hill Farm* makes lively reading; as a sign of the times it gives an encouraging account of the part that a specialised industrial skill could play in an expanding agriculture.

Back to the Country is a straightforward textbook with the subtitle "How to Make a Living in the Country." It is up to date in its information, comprehensive and well planned. Novices who hope to emulate Mr. Reynolds might start by reading *Back to the Country*. Some bachelors may shy away from the stern recommendation to marry "a buxom wench, well broken in to hard work," but housekeepers are allowed in cases where a wife is chosen "for another reason." Mr. Smith and Miss Wilcox know their subject thoroughly and write in a practical and helpful way. DESMOND HAWKINS

FREE FRENCHMEN

Watch Over Africa. By DENIS SAURAT. *Dent.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

Professor Saurat was asked by General de Gaulle to visit French Equatorial Africa and advise upon the reorganisation of its secondary schools. This book records in diary form some of his experiences and considerations. It is enjoyable as well as enlightening, for the Professor writes English enviably well and possesses a delicate and personal sense of humour. That French Equatorial Africa rejected Vichy in favour of continuing as our ally is a fact of greater strategic and general importance than is usually recognised. If the French in the Chad and the Congo were collaborating with the Germans, the situation of the British and Belgian possessions in East and Central Africa would be decidedly uncomfortable. Professor Saurat pays a merited tribute to the Governor-General Eboué:

> Eboué is a black man of heavy build and great majesty, much blacker than any of his subjects in Equatorial Africa. He was born in the West Indies, acquired his status as a French citizen, passed all his examinations like any Frenchman, and ran up the gamut of the colonial administration.
>
> He was governing the Chad when France crashed. He was the first governor to join de Gaulle, and he gave the white race an example of integrity, courage and decision that will go down the centuries to the honour of the black races, and to the honour of that France that gave them their chance.

Professor Saurat, who is not a believer, has for long been deeply interested in religion, and his observations upon mission work in Africa deserve attention. His advice upon secondary education is no less interesting: he opposed the building of large boarding schools and recommended sending teachers wherever fifteen children could be assembled within reach of their parents.

Professor Saurat begins his book by Boswellising General de Gaulle. He is shown at the time of the Armistice waiting impatiently for some more prominent Frenchman, Noguès, for instance, or Mittelhauser, to come forward as a leader of the French who still hoped. None came. When hardly one man who was not British believed that we would and could still fight, Gaulle staked everything upon our resolution, and so initiated the revival of his country. Professor Saurat quotes a number of his excellent sayings.

> Do not interfere with liberty. On the contrary. What liberty there is among the people, what sap runs through the wood, encourage it, liberate it, accelerate it.
>
> The principle is easy. Because your trains run well and to time you need not oblige all your passengers to be at the station at the same time. You should have trains for them whenever they choose to come.
>
> The Nazi mistake, the Fascist mistake, is to think that in order to run a country well you must force everyone to obey orders. Thus they kill the spirit. On the contrary, adapt your machinery to the people's needs and then everyone can be free. Our civilisation can produce enough trains, enough of everything for everyone.
>
> The essential Nazi mistake is to destroy liberty in order to get organisation. On the contrary, if you can get good organisation then you can leave the people free, you can give them more freedom . . .
>
> Do you not believe that the calamities of the world are the result of our having too long forgotten—in some countries under pressure, in others, perhaps, through carelessness—to think?

The impetuosity of the General has lately led to an unlucky incident. It is satisfactory therefore to remember that he has categorically declared that it will be for the people of France to choose freely the government they desire. Not only his honour but that of the British Government is behind this guarantee. The French of France are now suffering more, and braving greater dangers, than even the most heroic of the Free French. Despite their government, they remain our allies in a war against all forms of autocracy. RAYMOND MORTIMER

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Week-end Competitions

No. 623

Set by G. W. Stonier

Lord Woolton has announced that "cats engaged in work of national importance" are to receive an allowance of powdered milk. A conversation between two cats on this topic (limit, 200 words) is requested from competitors.

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Monday, January 19th.

2. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 620

Set by Freda White

We offer the usual prizes for three remarks made by your partner at dinner, to which no rational reply is possible. Example: "I always buy my books at Aspreys."

Report by Freda White

Everyone at a dinner party is a host or a guest. In either quality he is bound to be polite. For the host must practise forbearance at his own table, and the guest, if he cannot muster wit in return for his entertainment, must offer civility at least. This rule disposes of Towanbucket, who suggests that the rational answer to "I always buy my books at Aspreys," would be "Why?" Besides, one knew perfectly why that spiritual great-grandson of Sir Walter Eliot said it; he was the sort of fatuous snob who thinks it impressive to buy a book at the most elaborate luxury-shop in Britain, though he could get the same one, for the same price, at a railway bookstall. My cherished bugbear, the Popinjay, has tickled numerous competitors. Among them are Joanna: "I always like to go to the best doctor, even when I don't take his advice"; Pablo: "I don't understand all this fuss about the black market of wines. After all, there are only enough stocks in the country for the people who can afford to pay a good price for wine"; A. Horton: "We never drank sherry in Safari"; L. T. Dent: "Of course, we sent George to Eton." But every man to his own distaste, other entrants this week fancy other species of imbecile. My heart goes out to Roderic Papineau, chained to the side of a hussy who said: "As a matter of fact, I have very long eyelashes," but perhaps they really were long, which would be some consolation. There could be little for K. W. Simpson beside a woman who observed, with the soup, "My brother once shot a hare, and he said it cried like a baby!" and none for Frank Hayward, hearing the dread words: "Right is right, and you can't talk me out of it." Sir Robert Witt met a superb specimen of the Yearner class: "I eat my lunch in the National Gallery. It helps." And N.B. encountered culture: "What's the average price of an Old Master?" Politics are a rich vein. M. E.'s partner said: "She said the Americans are yellow, and I agree"; and also "Our M.P. is such a nice man." Miss B. J. Chilling must have been at a hen-party: "It seems wrong that a man with a voice like Alvar Liddell's should have to fight"; and "I think it's terrible the way the war goes on." S. E. E. would find it hard to answer the woman who said: "But 48 hours a week! That's only two days out of seven." Arthur Keith's old lady who said: "Really, I don't know what the world's coming to, do you, Arthur? Budgie seed 4s. a pound!" must be a pet; so must not Raglan Hill's Fifth Columnist: "Of course, one must admit that Göring is a gentleman." (It used to be Franco.) Colic's neighbour is a true patriot, however: "My husband says that Dachshunds aren't really dogs at all." This topic can reach great heights. Peter Boulton's partner who said: "I often ask myself, Mr. Parsloe, why doesn't the High Command consult the Stars?" is slightly surpassed by M. M. Griffith's "of course, I think God is bound to come in on our side in the end."

Idiocy pure can be maddening, like that of Towanbucket's partner: "No great man is really great, do you think?" or "I know she'd be awfully good at Government work; she did a wonderful pageant for us once," from Margerie Scott. But on second thoughts, perhaps that remark was deep; there are striking resemblances between a wartime department and a pageant on a wet day. One can hear the tones of D. M. Barker's "I only said to my husband the other day, 'What an age it is since we set foot in Potter's Bar!'" I admit that T.'s lady: "My husband is really not at all interested in sex" would have been alarming, but I should have liked Edgar Lewis's "I have a cat at home which just purrs, and purrs, and purrs," and J. S. Nevin's meditative "I never really like to be dining during an air raid." The difficulty was getting three of the true vintage. After wavering, however, I recommend that David Mitchell and Irene Nicholson divide the first prize, John Theobald and Criticulous the second.

FIRST PRIZE

I

(1) The worst of clothes coupons is that you can't get enough of them.

(2) Somehow Stalin seems to have become much less red now.

(3) I do think it's a pity they can't keep the Burma Road in proper repair. DAVID MITCHELL

II

(1) My partner was shown a photograph of a beach in Hawaii. "If it weren't for the palms it might be Bournemouth, mightn't it?" she said.

(2) "The heroine's dress was cut vulgarly low in front," my partner said, describing a film. "Of course," she added, "I was seeing it from the gallery, which made it rather worse. But they ought to think of that when they dress their stars, don't you agree?"

(3) "No, I wouldn't trust him," said my companion: "You know he's only half British."

IRENE NICHOLSON

SECOND PRIZE

I

(1) I've heard the most naughty stories about you.

(2) My sister Edith thinks your books are so terribly interesting.

(3) My brother says that the only way to win this war is through moral rearmament.

JOHN THEOBALD

II

(1) Trans-Atlantic Journalist, seemingly a woman: "It is surprising that even now you get the best mixed drinks at the Athenaeum."

(2) Army Chaplain on leave: "The divine qualities of humanity truly emerge amid the roar of guns." (Lord P . . . by and Col. Blimp and I also remain speechless.)

(3) Lady Vere de Vere: "I know on very good authority from the F.O. that the Cairo Spokesman is the Sphinx." CRITICULOUS

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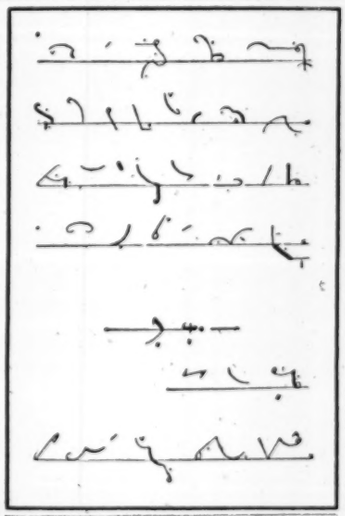

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